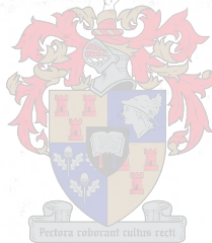


# **Abuse suffered by the Amakhoti in the Xhosa community**

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**Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts (Psychology) at the University of Stellenbosch**



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**Statement**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

.....10/2/2000.....  
Date

## **Summary**

The issue of violence against women in South Africa is receiving much attention in both the media and in Parliament. Yet, women remain vulnerable to violence in their communities and homes. Certain cultural practices and traditional beliefs in black communities in South Africa exacerbate this problem. Despite declarations in human rights documents and legislation such as the Domestic Violence Act of 1998, some cultural practices seem to defy condemnation. Set within a framework of socio-cultural theory, this study is aimed at exposing one such cultural practice as abusive towards women.

Marriage in the Xhosa tradition is a process rather than a single event. In this study, the initiation phase through which a Xhosa woman goes when she marries, called the makhoti-stage, is investigated. As marriage is also a family issue rather than an individual choice, the treatment that the amakhoti receive from the entire extended family is investigated.

A critical ethnographic report was compiled from the experiences of twenty women who are or were amakhoti. Firstly, abusive behaviour is categorised as physically, sexually or psychologically abusive. Other practices such as witchcraft and the paying of lobola (bride-price) are also shown to be abusive. Secondly, the social context of the makhoti phase is explored. Aspects of the social context of the abusive situation which come under scrutiny are, the choice of a partner, residential pattern of women during their time as a makhoti, and reasons for staying in the relationship. Patterns of abusive behaviour are identified as they relate to specific roleplayers in the extended family. Thirdly, the emotions experienced by the participants during their time as a makhoti as well as their coping skills are explored.

The results of this study indicate that the amakhoti in the Xhosa community are exposed to extremely abusive treatment at the hands of their husbands, their own family and their in-laws, and that much of this treatment is perpetuated later on in the marriage. The study also indicates that other women in the extended family also indulge in abusive behaviour towards the makhoti, despite the fact that they shared the same fate.

The study confirms that Xhosa women are purposefully kept in a position of disempowerment and subservience by cultural beliefs and practices which inhibit their personal development.

## **Opsomming**

Die kwessie van geweld teen vroue in Suid-Afrika geniet tans baie aandag van sowel politici as die media. Desnieteenstaande is vroue steeds kwesbaar vir geweld, veral in die gemeenskap en die huis. Bepaalde kulturele praktyke en tradisionele opvattinge dra daartoe by om hierdie probleem in die swart gemeenskap in Suid-Afrika te vererger. Hoewel menseregte dokumente en wetgewing soos die Wet op Gesinsgeweld van 1998 op die oog af vroue beskerm, blyk dit dat sekere kulturele gebruike en tradisies nie as diskriminerend teenoor vroue geëtiketteer word nie en dus veroordeling daarvan vryspring.

In die Xhosa tradisie is 'n huwelik 'n proses eerder as 'n enkele gebeurtenis en ook 'n familie aangeleentheid eerder as 'n individuele besluit. In hierdie studie word die inisiasie periode van 'n Xhosa vrou se huwelik (die sogenaamd makhoti fase) onder die loep geneem. Die behandeling wat die makhoti ontvang van die uitgebreide gesin word ondersoek om te bepaal of dit as misbruikend teenoor die vrou beskou kan word.

'n Kritiese etnografiese verslag is saamgestel uit die ervarings van twintig vroue wat amakhoti was of steeds is. Die behandeling wat hulle ontvang het, word gekategoriseer onder fisiese-, seksuele- en sielkundige vorms van misbruik, terwyl praktyke soos die betaal van lobola en die gebruik van toordery ook uitgewys word as misbruikend teenoor die vroue. Tweedens word die sosiale konteks van die misbruik ondersoek. Aspekte van die sosiale konteks wat bespreek word sluit in die keuse van 'n huweliksmaat, residensiële patrone van die amakhoti en die redes wat aangevoer word om in die huwelik te bly. Verder word patrone van misbruik geïdentifiseer soos dit met bepaalde rolspelers in die uitgebreide gesin verband hou. In die derde instansie word verslag gegee van die emosies wat die vroue ervaar het en die sielkundige meganismes wat aangewend is om in die situasie aan te pas.

Die resultate van die studie dui daarop dat die amakhosi in die Xhosa gemeenskap blootgestel word aan uiterste misbruik deur hul mans, sy uitgebreide gesin en haar eie familie. Dit blyk verder dat baie van hierdie behandeling ook in later fases van die huwelik voortgesit word. Die resultate dui ook aan dat ander vroue in die uitgebreide gesin betrokke is by misbruik ten spyte daarvan dat dieselfde lot hulle toekom.

Die studie bevestig dat kulturele praktyke en opvattinge Xhosa vroue doelbewus in 'n minderwaardige en onderdanige posisie hou en daardeur persoonlike ontwikkeling strem.



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

In the eight years working as a community development officer, the researcher has made the acquaintance of several African women. With time she has come to realise that the authority that men have over women in this community, impacts on their lives in ways which she could not even imagine. What is more alarming is that it seems to be tolerated and even endorsed by the women. The director of the Mosaic Training, Service and Healing Centre for Women, who has been counselling and working with Xhosa women on a daily basis for three years, confirmed this. Mosaic Training, Service and Healing Centre for Women is one of the major role players in the combat against violence against women in the Western Cape. Trained community workers render counselling and advice services to abused women and are also involved in public education of women in this regard. The researcher discovered that it was particularly the young married women, who were married according to cultural law who were subjected to abusive treatment from both their husbands and families-in-law.

A *makhoti* in the Xhosa tradition is a newly wed women. The term indicates that she is undergoing an initiation period following her marriage. The *makhoti*-status of women, along with the taboos and rituals they observe, has been documented mainly in anthropological and sociological studies. Unfortunately, without exception, a very romantic picture is painted of a mother-in-law teaching her daughter-in-law the trade, with the family-in-law 'welcoming the new bride'. While many authors of literature on the Xhosa culture (e.g. Junod, 1913; Alberti, 1968; Wilson, 1981) have criticised cultural practices such as the *lobola* (brides price) system and polygamy, none have recognised the *makhoti*-status as potentially abusive.

## **1.2. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA: ESTIMATES AND RESEARCH PRIORITIES**

Violence against women in South Africa is currently estimated to involve between 1 in 6 (Machonachie & Van Zyl, 1994) and 1 in 4 women (NICRO: Women's Support Centre, 1998). Individual studies indicate that this rate may even be higher. One study indicated that 40% of women who are referred to the Office of the Family Advocate, report violence as the reason for the breakdown of their relationships (Schroeder & Bosman, 1995) and in a survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council, 43% of the respondents were victims of battering or marital rape (Machonachie & Van Zyl, 1994).

While estimates of family violence are complicated by the private nature thereof, estimates of non-physical maltreatment of women are virtually impossible to make. It is further complicated by the fact that behaviour may be culturally endorsed. The evasiveness of a realistic picture of the extent of violence in the family context should not discourage the research community from exploring the field. In fact, the cultural dynamics and the specific social and psychological context of abuse in the South African community has in recent years been raised as a priority for research (e.g. Human Rights Watch/ Africa, 1995; Pretorius, 1987; Spiegel, 1996). In response to this, various studies have been conducted in previously disadvantaged communities by sociologists, psychologists, criminologists and students of law and social work alike - most of the studies are qualitative by nature (e.g. Artz, 1999; Bachman & Coker, 1995; Glanz & Spiegel, 1996; Russel, 1995).

Cultural practices such as painful initiation rites, dowry-related murder and child marriages (Levinson, 1989) differ from the conventional concept of women's abuse. Participating in cultural practices is to some extent seen as mandatory by the group and the deeds are not criminalised. Literature, however, recognises these cultural practices as abusive.

Marcus (1994) states:

Violence against women, especially in the home, may not be identified in many societies as a significant problem. Even if it is even [sic] recognised as a problem, all too often it is distinguished from other forms of punishable violence in a society; this distinction confines it to the category of “discipline” or response to “provocation”; it is minimised or denied, or viewed as individual and aberrant rather than a culturally justified and endorsed systemic practice designed to silence and to coerce a clearly identifiable population.

The absence of a broad, transnational, and transcultural indictment of the violence constitutes a telling statement about women as citizens; they are the targets of unpunishable and, therefore, implicitly endorsed violence (p. 17).

It is encouraging to see that recognition has been given to cultural differences in the social and psychological context of abuse by legislation such as the Domestic Violence Act of 1998. This Act proposes the recognition of customary law and marriage traditions of black South African tribes. The acknowledgement of customary marriages in itself, however, says little about the treatment of women in these marriages at the hands of their husbands and families. If the researched facts of what women are enduring and the impact thereof on their lives, do not reach grass roots level, the situation is unlikely to change.

### **1.3. AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

The object of this study is to establish whether the treatment that the *amakhoti* receive from both their husbands and their family can be labelled as abusive or not. This is achieved by compiling a critical ethnographic report of various aspects of the life of the *amakhoti* against the backdrop of cultural practices and basic human rights documents.



Although the practice of being a makhoti is confined to the Nguni group of cultures, the intention of the researcher is not to compare the abuse of the amakhoti with the conventional concept of women's abuse, but rather to explore the social context in which the treatment occurs, in order that a conclusion may be drawn about the abusiveness of these practices.

#### **1.4. ISSUES PERTAINING TO WHITE MIDDLE CLASS RESEARCHERS AND BLACK PARTICIPANTS**

The prospect of a white middle class researcher researching issues in black families may raise certain questions. Questions of this nature are not unique to this research project but have, in fact, been discussed in works by particularly black feminists (e.g. Carby, 1982; Hill Collins, 1990).

The first question that is raised, centres mainly around the experience (or rather the lack thereof) of the researcher with regard to the situation under scrutiny. The researcher's lack of first hand experience of both the Xhosa culture and abuse is not denied and should be taken into account when this report is evaluated. Edwards (1996) states that "wisdom" (p.86) does not necessarily mean that you have to experience a situation yourself, but you need to have been part of an empathetic dialogue with those who have. This has been the case with both the issues at hand. The researcher has been working closely with Xhosa women for the past seven years in various community development projects including awareness campaigns and workshops on the abuse of women. In 1997 the researcher received training as a lay counsellor for abused women. This training and experience has been vital in her ability to listen empathetically to participants and to see the world through their eyes.

A second issue is that of the possible portrayal of a negative stereotype of black families as opposed to a more positive portrayal of white, coloured or Indian families. Statements by



the researcher to prove the contrary are unlikely to erase the preconception that this may be the case. It should be stated that it was through the encouragement of the staff members of the Mosaic Training, Service and Healing Centre for Women that the research project was undertaken. Twelve of the centre's community workers have been included in the group of participants. Ethnographic research is the one method in social science which allows the data to speak for itself. By using this method, an attempt has been made to avoid this very problem. By using verbatim quotations from interviews an effort was made not to interfere with the participants' views of their family and and of their in-laws.

It can also be argued that the definition of abuse in the Western culture may not apply directly to the situation or nature of abuse in the black family. This is certainly one of the reasons for this research being undertaken in the first place. In this study abuse is described against the backdrop of the new constitution and the human rights charters which are accepted and acknowledged in South Africa. This is done in an attempt to put abuse in the context which the South African community accepts as its norm.

Final note can be made of the sensitive nature of some of the information in the interviews. In the opinion of the researcher, any objection by black participants to giving sensitive information (including the sexual relationship between husband and wife) should have been raised by the participants themselves. None of the participants, however, declined to answer any questions put to them. This may be ascribed to the fact that most of the participants have known the researcher for a period of six months or more and were clear as to the purpose of the research. The participants who did not know the researcher were clients of the Mosaic community workers and had been informed about the motive of the study by Mosaic. This hopefully erased all suspicion about a white researcher asking questions to black participants. The experience of the researcher was that the women spoke openly about their relationship with their husbands, families and in-laws. The Mosaic community workers were obviously more comfortable with expressing their emotions and opinions, but none of the women who were interviewed hesitated to tell the story of their suffering.

### 1.5. ASPECTS OF THE TRADITIONAL WORLD VIEW

A person's world view lies so central to his/her own thoughts, actions and relationships, that it may be difficult to identify this as a learned concept. One's world view does, however, have a profound influence on one's daily life and perception of stimuli. In order to place abuse in the Xhosa community in context, one will therefore have to consider certain aspects of their traditional world view. It is not insinuated that the traditional world view is a rigid perspective that has not been subject to many changes or cannot be changed, but it gives an indication of the basic frame of reference of black people in South Africa.

The concepts and structure of the traditional world view of the black South Africans are often generalised by authors as characteristic of the various tribes (e.g. Mbiti, 1969; Van der Walt, 1994; Van Rooy, 1978). According to Van Rooy, Africans experience the cosmos as a hierarchy of forces, each with a fixed place in the totality and exercising influence and power on each other. Man has his own place in this hierarchy, together with God, the living dead (ancestors) and animals. Mbiti confirms this: "In human relationships there is an emphasis on the concept of hierarchy based partly on age and partly on status. In practice this amounts to a ladder ranging from God to the youngest child." (p.205).

The concept of hierarchy of forces accounts for the strong emphasis on status and seniority in the African community (Van Eeden, 1991). The harmony of forces can be disturbed by amongst others, neglecting one's responsibility or disregarding seniority. To the African, wellbeing and security means being integrated into society and hence being in harmony with the cosmos. Knowing one's proper place in the kinship group and in the tribe, and acting accordingly, is the highest virtue (Muthwadini, 1990; Ngesi, 1994).



Some propositions of Van der Walt's (1994, p. 204 - 208) comparison of the concepts of individualism versus communalism bear specific relevance to this study. They are represented in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparison of an African World View (Communalism) with a Western World View (Individualism)

<b>Communalism</b>	<b>Individualism</b>
First the community and then the individual	First the individual then the community or relationships
<b><u>Implications</u></b>	<b><u>Implications</u></b>
Inclusive attitude	Exclusive attitude
Security	Loneliness
Intense strong relationships	Casual, impersonal interpersonal relationships
Strong group pressure	Opinion of the group not so important
Individual initiative is not appreciated or encouraged - happy human relations are a priority	Individual initiative is highly regarded - personal achievement is more important than attention to the community
Great degree of uniformity	Individual differences are preferred
Duties towards the community are emphasised	The rights of the individual are stressed
Shares with others readily, generosity	Acquisition for personal use, the danger of materialism
Peaceful coexistence is highly regarded	Confrontation is not avoided at all costs
Dialogue: decisions have to be taken with the approval of the group, and everybody has the opportunity to air views	Monologue: decisions are often taken individually or by a few - do not waste time through endless discussions
Modesty, compliance, pliability, willingness to compromise - character traits which lead to peaceful coexistence with one's fellow man	Honesty, frankness, incorruptibility, steadfastness and perseverance - all individual virtues
Values such as friendliness, helpfulness, hospitality, a forgiving nature, patience and brotherliness are highly regarded	Formality, self-sufficiency, etc. are highly regarded



Comparison of an African World View (Communalism) with a Western World View (Individualism)  
(continued)

<b>Communalism</b>	<b>Individualism</b>
Poverty means that one does not have children or does not belong to a family	Poverty is an indication that one (as an individual) does not have a (large) house, (expensive) car and (huge) salary
People are important	Things are important
Man-centred culture: be available for others	A task-orientated culture: do things for others
Prefer doing things together	Prefer doing things alone
Group egoism	Ordinary, individual egoism
Ethnic or tribal ethics or morality. Right means defending your own group and wrong means to sin against your own group	More universal ethics: any transgression against other individuals is wrong
Shame plays a more important role than guilt in ethics. (It is important that people should not know what you did wrong, so that your public image should not be damaged)	Guilt is perhaps more important than a sense of shame. (Personal guilt is felt even though nobody else knows about it)
Marriage is compulsory for all, and intended to engender children above all	No strong pressure to marry, and marriage is intended for the happiness of the couple above all

Note. Adapted from The liberating message: A Christian world view for Africa by B.J. Van der Walt (1994), (pp. 204 - 208)

It is evident from the table above that collectivity is a theme central to the African world view (including the view of marriage and family). Siqwana-Ndlulo (1993) states that Africans see themselves and their roles in society only in relation to the whole community to which they belong. She states that the individual's three levels of existence, (as an individual, as a member of a group and as a member of a community) in the African culture are fused through the belief that all forces perpetually interact and interpenetrate one another.

This may also indicate that social pressure on black women to stay in an abusive relationship and to tolerate the treatment they receive, is stronger than it is in the Western culture. This is an important point for both researchers and practitioners to consider.



## CHAPTER 2

### CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

#### 2.1. DEFINING ABUSE

The definition of abuse has been moulded over a period of time as research in the field has developed. The definition has grown from a simple description of physical violence to include both mental and psychological elements as well as neglect. Kornblitt (1994) lists the following elements to be included in any current definition of abuse:

- a. Actions or omission of behaviour causing damage to members within the family group
- b. Intentionality; and
- c. Negative incidence on the individual's psyche or physical development, health or perception of himself

In defining abuse (especially in a cross-cultural study), one may argue that the true test as to whether any action or omission is to have a negative effect on psychological development or health, lies in how the victim experiences it. Hammersley (1992) quotes Geuss, summarising the paradox of such an argument: "... to know what is required for enlightenment and emancipation we must already be enlightened and emancipated" (p.115).

In many cultures women are socialised to accept physical and social chastisement as part of the husband's marital prerogative, making them less likely to self-identify as abused (Friedman & Todd, 1994; Heise, Raikes, Watts & Zwi, 1994). This does not mean that violence or abuse does not occur, but may only be acknowledged in retrospect. Kornblitt (1994) states that it is with interaction with "the outside world" (p. 1182) (outside of the

cultural stereotypes of family) that violent behaviour in the family is denaturalised and denounced. It is, however, necessary that the context in which the treatment is evaluated be taken into consideration. Literature on family violence primarily reflects a Western world view and cultural perspective. Assumptions about the concept of family, for example, rarely make provision for the possibility that women may not be in a monogamous marriage/relationship or that the abuse may indeed not be restricted to her nuclear family but that the extended family or other members of the household (see 2.3.) may also be involved. Current literature also hardly makes provision for the influence of a strong patriarchal system in the wider family context as opposed to the nuclear family.

## **2.2. BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTS FOR SOUTH AFRICANS**

In the light of problems experienced with the labelling of behaviour in a cross-cultural perspective as 'abusive', guidance is sought in the basic human rights documents which have been accepted and endorsed by the South African government. In Appendix 1, a selection of relevant articles from three human rights documents namely: the African (Banjul) Charter on Human and People's Rights, the Women's Charter for Effective Equality and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (as compiled by Amien & Farlam, 1998) are included. These articles and clauses apply to men, women and children and supposedly represent the ideal treatment of them, both as citizens and individuals. They are intended to serve as a backdrop to evaluate the results of this study.

In theory, the rights and obligations of the individual, as stated in these charters seem to be aimed at protecting women and children. Even in the early stage of this research, however, it becomes evident that theory and cultural practice may contradict each other. A few examples of such apparent contradictions are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Apparent Contradictions between Clauses of Human Rights Charters and Cultural Practices

Human rights charter clauses	Cultural practices
a. Women shall have freedom of choice in establishing relationships (Women's Charter for Effective Equality, Article 8)	Arranged marriages
b. Women, including women married under the customary law or by religious rites, shall be entitled to guardianship over children (Women's Charter for Effective Equality, Article 8)	In the Xhosa culture, children borne in wedlock belong to the family of the husband and entitles them to guardianship over such children in the event of a divorce (Maithufi, 1993)
c. Every individual shall have the right to free association provided that he abide by the law (African Charter on Human and People's Rights, Article 10)	In the Xhosa culture, friendship between married and unmarried women is actively discouraged (Jonas, 1972)
d. Everyone has the right to bodily and psychological integrity, which includes the right to security in and control over their body (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Clause 12.2.)	It is the duty of a Xhosa woman to have sex with her husband. He can demand it at any time, even if it involves using physical force. (Van der Waal, 1996)

**2.3. DEFINING FAMILY**

Family theory offers diverse definitions of family, each focusing on different aspects of family structure, functioning and relations. Two theories that offer perspectives particularly useful to this study, are the structural-functionalism and feminist theories.



The structural-functionalism views society as an organism that resists change and maintains itself in some sort of equilibrium (Broderick, 1993). The theory is concerned with the functional connections among the various parts of the system. The family is thus seen as a structure that satisfies the members' needs and operates for the survival and maintenance of society. Structural-functionalism acknowledges that the structure of the family (its numbers and designation of positions) may vary considerably, but states that certain functions of the institution of "family" are universally met to satisfy the physical and psychological needs of the members (Smith, 1995).

Studies by scholars in the structural-functionalism, found that family structure, function and social complexity are related. They found that simpler, pre-industrial societies and more advanced industrial societies have smaller family structures, whereas agricultural societies are characterised by extended families. As society moves toward modernisation, industrialisation and urbanisation, traditional family forms shift from the extended family to the "marriage-based" family (Smith, 1995).

Murdock's definition of family as quoted by Ingoldsby (1995) relies heavily on the structural characteristics of the family .

The family is a social group characterised by common residence, economic co-operation, and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults (p. 83).

Feminist theories define family in terms of its familial relationships and gender-based family roles. It sees family as a site of oppression and conflict due to women's subordination, but also a source of strength, solidarity, and ability to survive. Families are thus seen as units of experience (Boss, Doherty, LaRossa, Schumm & Steinmetz, 1993).



Ramphele (1996), an author associated with socio-cultural studies, makes a case for the use of the concept of 'household' rather than family, especially in research of the contemporary black South African community. Due to various political and social influences, the black households in South Africa have come to function as families, although the individuals may not all be related. The above definition of family leaves room for such a notion.

## 2.4. DEFINING THE MAKHOTI - STATUS

*"Makhoti is a stage, I can say....it is the first stage in the marriage. Even if you are legally married with white wedding you are going to bridge that stage. You cannot be a qualified wife without being makhoti first. You must go through that black doek service thing....that is makhoti" - Phumza*

The makhoti-status (plural form: amakhoti) for a Xhosa woman, as is stated above, is a status linked to her marriage - whether cultural or legal - and literally means 'newly married woman'. It is not specified whether the status precedes or follows the marriage ceremony, but traditionally it used to be the first year of the marriage during which the young bride cooks, cleans and generally serves her mother-in-law and the rest of her husband's family (Junod, 1913; Wilson, 1981). The makhoti-status is also associated with taboos which are inflicted on the woman, rituals that she has to maintain as well as her particular position in the household. Men are in control of the process of marriage by determining the date and form of the wedding and the procedure of 'making his lover a makhoti'. This topic is explored in more detail in the literature review.

The question may well be asked if an institution such as the makhoti-status is still relevant to the modern Xhosa family. Wilson (1981) and Jonas (1972) found that this practice has persisted along with the initiation ceremony of men. Ngesi (1994) states that the practice amongst the Zulu (another tribe in the Nguni group of tribes and closely related to the

Amaxhosa) has discontinued. He goes on to say, however, that while the brides want to be free from interference by their elders, the husbands are still keen that their wives undergo this training under the mother-in-law. He also states that, "Men tenaciously adhere to the traditional belief that women should submit at all costs" (p.42). Women thus, by implication, do not have the freedom to choose whether or not to be a makhoti.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1. ABUSE IN THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Theories of abuse are broadly categorised in three different paradigms: the psychiatric paradigm, the sociological paradigm and the systemic paradigm. Each houses a number of different theories and approaches to explain, not only the causal factors in women's abuse, but also the prevalence and the possible treatment thereof (Erasmus, 1989).

Of particular relevance to this study is the sociological paradigm and particularly the socio-cultural/macro-level theories. Theories included in the socio-cultural category are: the functional theory, structural theory, culture of violence theory, patriarchal theory, conflict theory and ecological theory. The socio-cultural theories of violence examine social structures such as: norms, values, institutional organisation or systems operations to explain individual violence (Viljoen, 1987). The sociological paradigm differs from the systemic paradigm in that it arises from a mechanistic world view which seeks to explain human behaviour by identifying linear-causal relationships between observable elements (Erasmus, 1989). In line with the sociological paradigm, factors which Heise et al. (1994) found to be operative in perpetuating gender-based violence, are listed in Table 3.



Table 3

Factors Operative in Perpetuating Gender-Based Violence

<b>Cultural:</b>	<p>Gender-specific socialisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Cultural definitions of appropriate sex roles</li> <li>* Expectations of roles within relationships</li> <li>* Beliefs in the inherent superiority of males</li> </ul> <p>Values that give men proprietary rights over women</p> <p>Notion of the family as private/under male control</p> <p>Customs of marriage (bride-price/dowry/exogamy)</p> <p>Acceptability/glorification of violence as a means to resolve conflict</p>
<b>Economic:</b>	<p>Women's economic dependence on men</p> <p>Limited access to cash and credit</p> <p>Discriminatory laws regarding inheritance, property rights, use of communal lands and maintenance after divorce</p> <p>Limited access to employment in the formal and the informal sector</p> <p>Limited access to education and training for women</p>
<b>Legal:</b>	<p>Plural system of law which is in place: customary, common, religious</p> <p>Lesser legal status for women</p> <p>Laws regarding divorce, child custody, maintenance and inheritance</p> <p>Legal definitions of rape and domestic abuse</p> <p>Low levels of legal literacy among women</p> <p>Insensitive treatment of women by police and judiciary</p>
<b>Political:</b>	<p>Under representation of women in power, politics and in legal and medical professions</p> <p>Domestic violence not taken seriously</p> <p>Notions of family being "private" and beyond the control of the state</p> <p>Risk of challenge to <i>status quo</i>/religious laws</p> <p>Limited organisations of women as a political force (e.g. through autonomous women's organisations)</p> <p>Limited participation of women in organised/formal political system</p>

Note. From "Violence against women: A neglected public health issue in less developed countries," by Heise L., Raikes, A., Watts, C.H., & Zwi, A.B., 1994, Social Science and Medicine, 39 (9), 1165 - 1179.



A micro-perspective on patriarchy for example suggests that a notion of authority underlies patriarchy and that the traditional family reflects domination by men who hold authority over women. The socialisation processes within the family then perpetuate gender imbalances. These processes are imbedded in institutions such as tradition, religion and economics. On a macro-level, the patriarchy theory states that society creates economic and legal conditions that maintain gender-based violence. Women are marginalised to remain economically dependant through unequal division in labour and lower earnings. Laws and policies reflect male dominance and are not structured to protect women (Artz, 1999). Functional theory suggests that laws reflect the formal norm of a society and that individuals are subject to them. The law, as a formal norm, has its own identity, independent of any personal whim of individual members of society. Society thus influences the individual and not the other way around (Togni, 1996).

The conflict theory suggests that society is not harmonious and that there is continuous conflict inherent in any social system. Max Weber, a conflict theorist, distinguishes between three basic forms of authority, of which the traditional authority, bears specific relevance to this study. This form of authority is based on the general belief that certain individuals have legitimacy of status as a result of tradition that goes back several generations and the cycle is perpetuated. Weber's other two forms of authority are legal authority and charismatic authority (Togni, 1996).

Recent cross-cultural research in the culture of violence tradition, has been based on one of two basic models of human aggression. The catharsis model, on the one hand, suggests that all groups have an innate level of aggression that must periodically be discharged in some way. It suggests that women and children are convenient, though inappropriate targets for rage. The cultural pattern model, on the other hand, suggests that some societies have a basic set of values and beliefs that emphasise aggression and violence (Levinson, 1989). This model incorporates the social learning perspective. By implication, the cultural pattern approach suggests that violence is a way of life in some societies.



Five hypotheses derived from the cultural pattern model have been used to explain family violence (Levinson, 1989): Firstly, it suggests that violence is learned behaviour that is shared by members of groups whose value systems encourage the use of violence. Secondly, the cultural consistency hypothesis suggests that cultural values that are seemingly unrelated to family violence, may in fact create norms governing family life that both lead to and perpetuate violence in the family. The third hypothesis suggests that violence between family members is passed on from generation to generation through victimisation or witnessing of family violence during childhood. The fourth approach, the cultural spillover hypothesis, suggests that the endorsement of violence to attain socially approved ends, increases the likelihood that this legitimisation of force will be generalised to other spheres of life where force is approved of to a lesser extent such as in familial relations. The final hypothesis suggests that societies either exhibit many forms of violence or few. Violence can thus indeed become a cultural pattern (Levinson, 1989).

The number of participants to this study limits the researcher's ability to endorse or reject the above hypotheses, but they may be useful in further study of the topic and planning of intervention strategies for women in the Xhosa community.

### **3.2. TYPES OF ABUSE**

Literature on domestic abuse generally distinguishes between physical and psychological abuse (Folingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause & Polek, 1990; Kornblitt, 1994; Murphy & Cascardi, 1993). Some researchers (e.g. Gelles & Straus, 1988; Shepard & Campbell, 1992) view sexual violence as a sub-category of physical violence, while others see it as a separate category of violence (e.g. Heise et al., 1994; Tolman, 1989).

Physical abuse is thus classified as assaultive behaviour which may include sexual activity against the will of the woman. Heise et al. (1994) include in this category of abuse,

coercion and life threatening deprivation, dowry-related murder as well as genital mutilation.

In the Family Violence Act of 1998, sexual abuse is defined as sexual conduct that humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates the sexual integrity of a person.

Psychological abuse, in short, refers to the indulgence in non-physical maltreatment (Hudson & McIntosh, 1981; Walker, 1979), and is also referred to as indirect abuse (Gondolf, 1987), emotional abuse (Tolman, 1989) and mental or psychological torture (Russel, 1982).

In an effort to quantify the concept of psychological maltreatment, different authors have used various conceptual frameworks for the development of measuring instruments and classifications of different kinds of psychological abuse (e.g. Follingstad et al., 1990; Tolman, 1989). For the purposes of this study, the basic classification of psychological abuse, found in the Power and Control Wheel developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Minnesota (Pence & Paymar, 1993), was used as a starting point. The project developed a model in which violent relationships are contrasted with non-violent relationships and specific attention is paid to the types of abuse other than physical or sexual violence. This model is widely used for training purposes in South Africa for example, the “5-in-6 Project” and the Women’s Support Program of NICRO. The model provides a comprehensive and practical classification of abusive tactics which could be applied to a situation where family members, other than the husband, abuse the women. The behaviour of the husbands and members of the extended family and family-in-law were subsequently interpreted in relation to the types of abuse described in this model (see section 4.5.1).



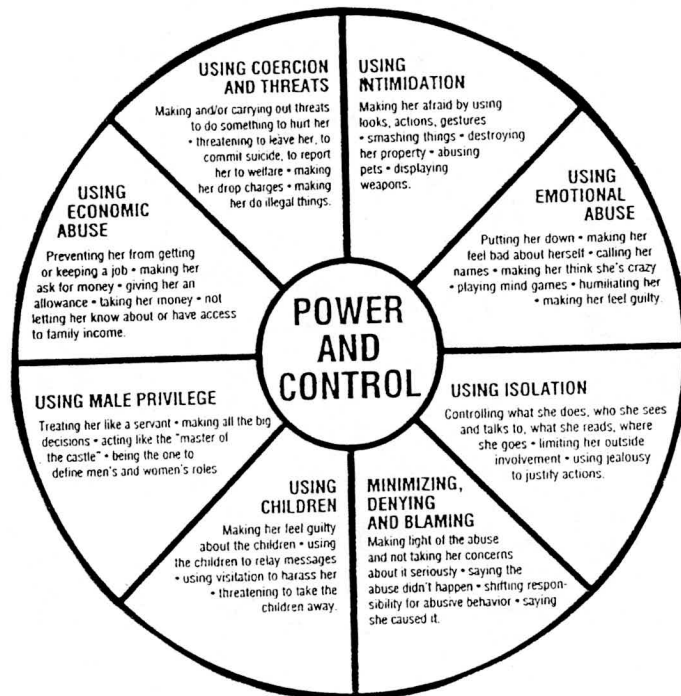


Figure 1. Power and Control Wheel

Source: Pence, E. and Paymar, M., Education groups for men who batter: The Duluth model, 1993.

### 3.3. PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF ABUSE

Research has shown that the psychological pain and effect of women's abuse far outweighs the physical pain endured by victims (Gelles & Straus, 1988; Walker, 1984).

Gelles and Straus (1988) came to the conclusion that the victims of abuse generally demonstrate poor self-concepts. Abuse leaves them feeling worthless, powerless, helpless and humiliated. Shame and self-blame are frequently reported. Women often feel that they have provoked the husband's behaviour or that they are to be blamed for the situation. They also reported that the abused women whom they have interviewed, typically appeared to have aged prematurely.

Not surprisingly, fear is one of the most common traits in abused women. Fear is often so great that it immobilises the woman. Depression and psychosomatic illnesses are frequently reported (Murphy & Cascardi, 1993).

Walker (1984) has identified a pattern of symptoms called, the “Battered Woman Syndrome” which was classified under Post Traumatic Stress Disorders for the first time in the DSM111 (American Psychiatric Association, 1980). The clinical syndrome includes features of both anxiety and affective disorders and also cognitive distortions which include dissociation and memory loss. Reliving traumatic events, disruption of interpersonal relationships and psycho-physiological disturbances typically occur. Victims of abuse may be hypersensitive to potential violence which leads to expectations of harm and a readiness to protect and defend themselves. A passive, helpless reaction may be adopted if self-defence or minimisation of harm is seen as an impossible task.

### **3.4. THE XHOSA FAMILY**

The purpose of reviewing literature on the Xhosa family is not to give a detailed account of life in the tribal Xhosa village or to suggest that it has not undergone any changes to date, but rather to give an account of the broad context in which the abuse of the amakhosi over a period of time must be considered. Specific traditions, customs and practices relevant to this study are described together with the results from the interviews. This is done in order to give specific context to the type or psychological context of abuse and to assist the reader in reaching a conclusion in this regard.

The first thing that has to be said about marriage and family, is that they are very important to the Xhosa people (see section 1.5). Mbiti (1969) states “..... the more important ones [ancestors] being those who were full human beings by virtue of going through the initiation rites, getting married and raising children” (p. 206).

As is the case with many other black tribes, the Xhosa family is supposedly a closely knit unit where everybody knows his exact place, obligations and privileges (Siqwana-Ndlulo, 1993).



### 3.4.1. Kinship and residential pattern

The nuclear family is the most common type of family worldwide and consists of one male and one female living in a conjugal relationship with their children (Ingoldsby, 1995). From descriptions of traditional Xhosa life and traditions, it is clear that they have a history of mainly extended families (Elliot, 1970; Krige, 1981). The extended family is a corporate economic and political unit, as well as a kinship-based group. Members work for the mutual benefit and welfare of individuals and nuclear families are recognised as part of the unit. The extended family is an ongoing body with a geographical base and it transcends the lifetime of its members (Ingoldsby, 1995).

The kinship of the Xhosa is organised in clans. A strong loyalty to the clan exists amongst the Xhosa (Siqwala-Ndulo, 1993). This is embodied by the woman showing respect (*hlonipa*) to all members of her husband's clan and the taboos related to marriages between members of the same patrilineal clan and selectively of the matrilineal clan (Du Preez, 1988).

Traditionally, the Xhosa has a patrilocal residential pattern (Russel, 1995; Wilson, Kaplan, Maki & Walton, 1952). This means that the young married couple is expected to reside in the "kraal" of the husband's family. Quite common in groups with patrilineal lineages or clans, patrilineal residence increases the authority of the groom's family (Ingoldsby, 1995).

Jonas (1972) found a changing residential pattern amongst modern Xhosa families in that they form a separate household very soon after marriage in contrast to the traditional residing of the young couple with the patrilineal household. He states, however, that a family residing in urban areas should not be seen as an independent household. The authority structure and economic arrangements may be linked to a patriarchal household located elsewhere to such an extent that the urban household can be seen as a dependent



extension thereof. In his research, Jonas found that most of the women oppose patrilocal residence as they feel that the family-in-law “disrespect and abuse” (p. 153) them.

### **3.4.2. Patriarchy, inheritance and authority**

According to Barber and Allen (1992) gender stratification leads to the exclusion of women from experiences and activities that could enhance their growth and development, their access to resources, and access to positions of power. Patriarchy can therefore be said to be an overt form of denying women their basic human rights. The Xhosa culture has a history of patriarchy (Jonas, 1972) which is still very much adhered to in the modern Xhosa family (Mkhize, 1990; Ramphele, 1996).

In the Xhosa tradition, the husband’s rights and authority is seldom questioned. Elliot (1970) states: “..... traditions, tribal laws and customs are things centuries old. For this reason the husband’s right is an established fact and so is the woman’s position in life” (p.53). This authority is assumed in many aspects of the Xhosa’s social and cultural life. In fact, Mkhize (1990) goes so far as to suggest that the Xhosa man has an open mandate in exercising his power. This assumed superiority of men leads to double standards with regard to the treatment that men and women receive within their family and with what the community tolerates of women and men respectively (Jonas, 1972; Tuupainen, 1970).

The notion that women are ‘owned’ by men, is not agreed upon by researchers. Arguments on both sides of the question somehow seem to bear relation to the lobola system which is discussed in greater detail in section 6.1.4.3. The fact remains that once the legal guardian of a woman has received the lobola, he has “lost authority and power over his daughter” (Mkhize, 1990, p.71). Russel (1995) describes the position of the daughters in the house as “eternal outsiders, soon to slip beyond the father’s authority” (p.27). It is hence implied that a woman has no legal persona under the customary law, and is at the mercy of a man (whether her father or husband) to exercise his authority over

her. Even after the death of her husband, the Xhosa woman remains part of the husband's family. As opposed to the Western culture, the death of a partner does not dissolve the marriage in the Xhosa culture. The brothers of the deceased are then entitled to take her on as a wife either in a monogamous or polygamous marriage (Jonas, 1972). To add to the argument that women are treated as property, Russel (1995) found that there is a substantial difference in the amount paid in lobola for "damaged" girls as opposed to "undamaged" (a virgin or girl without dependants) girls (p.25).

In accordance with the patriarchal system, the Xhosa culture is known to be patrilineally orientated (Junod, 1913; McAllister & Deliwe, 1994). All cultures, according to Ingoldsby (1995), have rules for defining who are important relatives. This does not mean that other biological connections are disregarded, but for the purpose of inheritance, marriage and other aspects of life, certain lines do matter and others not. Russel (1995) found that, although a woman, when she gets married, joins the lineage of her husband and comes under the influence of his ancestors, her relationship with his clan is always one of a stranger.

The law of inheritance follows a specific pattern among the Xhosa and a man has only a limited say as to what must happen to his own possessions when he dies. Women and girls are not entitled to any inheritance. In fact, women own very little other than their personal possessions (Elliot, 1970). The sons of a Xhosa man are his heirs, with the eldest being the main beneficiary. He, however, also has the responsibility of taking care of the family after the death of his father, which they duly adhere to (Ramphela, 1996; Russel, 1995).

### **3.4.3. Choice of a partner**

In the Xhosa tradition, there are four ways in which a man can obtain a bride. These different options are, however, not always available to a man and certainly not to a woman due to the fact that marriage is considered a family affair and not a private one (Elliot,



1970; Siqwana-Ndlulo, 1993). Jonas (1972) summarises the three forms of *ukutwala* (carrying away of a bride). Firstly, a man can literally, with the help of some friends and members of his family, abduct a woman to his home where she is forced to stay and lobola is paid to her father later. This happens without the consent of the woman or her parents. Secondly, lovers who wish to marry, but whose families have other plans for them, may elope. Lobola is then paid after her parents have given up looking for her. If they find her, they will bring her back to their home until lobola negotiations have been completed. This form of *ukutwala*, of course, happens with the consent of the woman, but not of her parents. In both the first and second instances, it is imperative that the family of the bride must be informed of the whereabouts of their daughter as soon as possible. Failure to do so, may result in a penalty for the future husband or may result in the assault of one or both of the couple. Thirdly, and most commonly (Wilson, 1981), the family of the bride negotiates with the family of a man on her behalf and the amount of lobola is fixed before the bride-to-be is merely informed about her marriage to the man.

The fourth option is for a suitor to convince both his own family and the family of his lover to let them marry. In this case the amount of lobola is the only issue to be dealt with (Siqwana-Ndlulo, 1993).

The custom of arranged or forced marriages seems to have undergone some change over time. Maithufi (1993) states that mutual consent of the couple has become compulsory even for traditional weddings. Even if this rings true for marriages today, many older women may be caught up in marriages with men they did not wish to marry and this may still affect them and possibly their children.

#### **3.4.4. Coexistence of traditional and modern marriage customs**

Customary marriage is a process (of which being a *makhoti* is one of the steps) and not a single event. Traditionally, a Xhosa marriage was validated by the payment of lobola (even



if it was only in part). The subsequent ritual of handing over the bride signified the transference of guardianship over the woman from father to husband and legitimising of children borne as a result of the marriage. With the institution of civil law in South Africa, the practice was never discontinued, but was practised alongside the so-called 'paper weddings' (Maithufi, 1993). In this study, several of the participants had been married traditionally for some years before marrying under civil law. They indicated the reason for their 'paper wedding' as being a way of protecting themselves from being abandoned and a means of obtaining some sense of financial security. As was seen in section 2.4., the choice of a customary marriage or Western style marriage (referred to as 'white wedding') does not influence the fact that a woman must become a makhoti.

Polygamy is still practised, but is not recognised by civil law (Ngesi, 1994). This practice is not pursued any further in this thesis because it does not bear specific relevance to the topic in this study.

#### **3.4.5. Status of the makhoti in the family**

Detailed descriptions of the amakhoti and the practices surrounding their lives and work, are not common in literature. The most comprehensive recording of the traditions of the Xhosa culture was done by the missionary, Junod, published in 1913. His descriptions of the life of the amakhoti are used as a source of reference where other sources fail.

As was indicated in sections 2.4 and 3.4.3., a woman is sometimes forced into a marriage or becomes a makhoti against her will. The ritual of initiation into the status of makhoti is associated with the presentation of long, German print dresses, a '*doekie*' (scarf for covering the hair) and a string of beads on the forehead, as well as a rug or shawl which is tied around the chest (Junod, 1913). The makhoti is never allowed to bare her breasts again or wear her hair uncovered. She wears dresses that sweep the floor and only after the birth of her first child may the shawl around her chest be replaced by a scarf around



her waist. The clothing of a makhoti is a sign of her respect for her family-in-law. During the makhoti-stage of a woman's married life, she must observe the rules of *ukuhlonipa* (respect, avoidance) very carefully. Kohler (1933) is of the opinion that taboos and *hlonipa* rules were instated for the fear of strangers and the prevention of familiarity between the family and evil influences. The *hlonipa* rules regulate not only her clothing, but almost every aspect of the makhoti's life. A distinction can be made between her relationship to persons and her actions with regard to objects and places (Du Preez, 1988).

The makhoti's relationship, specifically with her father-in-law, is one of avoidance. She is not allowed to look him in the eyes, speak to him, touch him or even give him something, but must put it next to him or employ someone else to give him what she is requested to. She is not allowed to eat in his presence or linger in his company. These rules also apply to the male relatives of the father-in-law and initially all male clan members (Junod, 1913). Avoidance rules do not apply as strictly to female members of the family-in-law, but the respect rules do. With younger female relatives, the makhoti has a less formal relationship and she is free to associate with the siblings of her husband (Jonas, 1972). The makhoti also has to avoid using certain names and the names of objects as a sign of respect for her family-in-law and their ancestors. Du Preez (1988) gives a lengthy account of this practice, but for the purpose of this study it will suffice to say that she is not allowed to mention the name of her husband's clan (i.e. her new surname), father-in-law, husband or any term that resembles their names. With her initiation, the makhoti is told by her mother-in-law and other female relatives how to *hlonipa*, which words to avoid and what to substitute them with. With regard to places, the makhoti is not allowed on the father-in-law's side of the hut. She does not clean or smear that side of the hut. She also refrains from ever going into her father-in-law's "kraal" (where the livestock is kept) and avoids the open area in front of the home, which is considered the gathering place for men. Apart from these taboo places, certain eating taboos are also associated with the makhoti-status. The makhoti is not allowed to eat the flesh of fowl, eggs, sugar cane, roasted maize, thick porridge and *amasi* (sour milk). Taboos regarding certain sections of meat of cattle and sheep are also observed.



Traditionally, the new bride not only resides within the village of her family-in-law, she also cooks at the fireplace of her mother-in-law. During the first year as a makhoti she is hardly more than a servant. She alone is responsible for the household tasks such as finding wood, fetching water, cooking and cleaning (Junod, 1913).

After an unspecified period has passed, taboos related to speech and diet are lifted and she is welcomed into the family-in-law with the ceremonial slaughtering of a goat. Her doekie is also moved higher on her forehead and the shawl around her shoulders is now tied under the arms and above the breasts until she bares her first child (Wilson, 1981). This alleviation of restrictions, however, does not indicate the end of the makhoti-status for a woman. Lifting of the taboo on amasi requires a separate occasion and is usually

celebrated only after the birth of the first child (Junod, 1913). In modern times, moving out of the home of the family-in-law or the birth of the first child is often the turning point in the restrictive relationship with the family-in-law (Jonas, 1972). Even with the above-mentioned alleviation and the possibility of moving into her own home, problems associated with the makhoti-status are unfortunately perpetuated whenever the daughter-in-law visits her husband's family.

In an interview with a Xhosa woman in the preliminary phase of this study, she summarised the position of the makhoti in the family as follows:

“... you are nothing. You are a big nothing, really.” - Primrose



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHOD OF INVESTIGATION**

In this chapter the methodological orientation of the research and critical ethnography will be discussed briefly as well as the evaluation of ethnographic research results. The participants will be introduced to the reader, and the procedures regarding the collection of data described.

#### **4.1. METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION**

The aim of this study is to explore the treatment a makhoti receives and the social context in which it takes place, in order that a conclusion may be drawn about the abusiveness of the practice. This treatment is seen against the backdrop of cultural practices, embedded in an African world view, and basic human rights documents endorsed by the South African community at large. Since very little literature could be found on the amakhoti, an ethnographic research design was selected as the most suitable method for the exploration of this topic. Conventional ethnography, however, would only affirm the status quo, while the topic of abuse of the amakhoti could not be studied without value-laden judgement. A critical ethnographic design thus suited the purpose better.

#### **4.2. CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY**

Critical ethnography is a style of analysis and discourse rooted in conventional ethnography and as a result, reflects the fundamental characteristics of analysis and the methodology of conventional ethnography. It requires attending, inter alia, to institutions, actions, images, utterances, events and customs. Thomas (1993) describes the focus of critical ethnographic research as, “....the study of the process of domestication and social

entrapment by which we are made content with our life conditions” (p.7). According to Thomas the data is then interpreted through a process of “defamiliarization” (p. 43) in which the data is revised and translated into something new.

Creswell (1993) describes critical ethnography as ethnography with a political motive. Critical ethnography does not stop at the description of situations or phenomena, but attempts to use the knowledge to facilitate change. Critical ethnography does not avoid making value-laden judgements and does not attempt to remain objective when evaluating data. This does not mean that interpretation of data is a case of, ‘whatever the researcher thinks’, but the subjectivity of the opinions of participants is reported objectively. The term, ‘critical’, represents both an activity and an ideology. As an activity, it implies a wide range of possibilities ranging from rethinking a perspective to political activism. As an ideology, critical thinking represents a shared body of principles of the relationship between knowledge, the results thereof and responsibility towards the community (Thomas, 1993).

Not every component of critical ethnography is inherently critical, and each aspect does not carry the same weight in every instance. Components of critical ethnography that may be critical, include: ontology, choice of a topic, methodology, selection of data and interpretation thereof, discourse and reflection (Creswell, 1998).

There is considerable variation in the nature of the products of ethnographic research. They can range from narrative accounts of events in a specific setting to the development of typologies and causal models. Such typologies may provide a basis for the development of theoretical models.

### **4.3. EVALUATING ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH RESULTS**

The analysis of data in ethnography is a process in which a researcher familiarises him/herself with a given situation through various techniques such as, participant observation or interviews with informants. The data is then grouped into organising themes, defined and described. Arranging data can be done by using various strategies. One could use analogous concepts or metaphors which may be drawn from other disciplines to translate seemingly unfamiliar meanings into something more familiar (Thomas, 1993). Another strategy involves using existing theory and adding to that, new or missing elements, while a third strategy involves applying existing theoretical models to the topic at hand (Hammersley, 1979).

The explorative and descriptive nature of ethnographic research, poses unique problems in the evaluation thereof. Hammersley (1992) gives a comprehensive summary of various stands taken in judging ethnographic research. He elaborates on the criteria applied by various authors to the evaluation of ethnography, and finally, reformulates these into two criteria to assess the research results. These criteria are: validity and relevance.

#### **4.3.1. Validity**

Hammersley (1992) sees an account as valid or true if it is an accurate representation of those features of the phenomena that it intended to describe. It is recognised and accepted that it is difficult, if not impossible, to know with certainty whether an account is true or not. Given this uncertainty, the validity of claims must be judged on the basis of the adequacy of the evidence offered to support them. There are three considerations in evaluating the sufficiency of evidence.



The first concerns the issues of credibility and plausibility. It must be considered whether claims which are made are sufficiently plausible in the light of existing evidence. In their work, researchers must seek to establish their findings as sufficiently plausible and credible to be accepted, not only from their own point of view, but also with the judgement of fellow researchers and practitioners.

The second consideration that determines the amount and nature of the evidence provided is the centrality of the claim to the argument which is being presented by the researcher.

The third consideration is the type of claim made. There needs to be a distinction between definitions, descriptions, explanations and theories. What is involved in assessing the validity of the claim varies according to which of these types it belongs. In the case of description (as relevant to this study) it must be shown that the phenomena described, fit the categories built into the description and that the information regarding the phenomena on which the categorisation is built, is accurate. Using a variety of sources of information (triangulation) also increases the validity of claims.

In literature, the concepts of reliability and validity in qualitative research are sometimes substituted with concepts such as, “trustworthiness”, “dependability”, “components of credibility” and “confirmability” (Ely, 1991; Riley, 1990). This supports the argument that qualitative research has to be evaluated with a different set of values than quantitative research.

Creswell (1993) includes *member checking* (verifying findings of the research with participants/other members of the population) and *triangulations* (verifying information from participants through other sources) as ways to increase the validity of ethnographic research. Thomas (1993) adds *peer group checking* (verifying findings by checking the consistency thereof with research results found by researchers in the same field) as another method.

#### **4.3.2. Relevance**

This aspect of any research is almost taken for granted. The main question in this respect, is of course: Relevance to whom and to what? In judging the relevance of research, there are two audiences that should be considered; namely, other researchers and practitioners. Relevance is judged according to the importance of the topic to these audiences and also by the contribution that the research is making to literature and to practice. The importance of the topic should reflect wider social values and circumstances. The topic should also relate to pressing problems that practitioners face or have major consequences for achieving goals they are pursuing.

The application of critical ethnography for the purposes of this study is discussed in chapter 5 (p 39).

#### **4.4. PARTICIPANTS**

Twenty women were interviewed in this study. Twelve of the twenty women are trained as lay counsellors for abused women and survivors of rape. They work in a non-governmental organisation called Mosaic Training, Service and Healing Centre for Women, currently based in Gugulethu, Cape Town. The counsellors have had training in, amongst others, gender sensitive basic counselling skills, lifeskills such as assertiveness, handling of conflict and aspects regarding the legal procedures pertaining to cases of violence against women. They have also been subjected to intensive counselling for two years themselves. The other women were either clients of Mosaic or acquaintances of the researcher.

In accordance with practice in qualitative research, participants of the study were selected rather than drawn from the population (Van Maanen, 1983). This was done firstly,

because of the sensitive nature of the research and secondly, for the unique insight that the Mosaic counsellors have into the problem of abuse in the Xhosa community. As counsellors they have been trained to see beyond the immediate circumstances, to what may or could be in a non-abusive relationship.

The participants belong to the population of married Xhosa women, who are established in the residential areas around Cape Town and the bordering Boland. All of the participants are or were makhotis. Women from various age groups were selected for this project.

In order to protect the identity of the participants, they will only be known by their first names. Participants could choose whether they wanted to use a pseudonym or their own name.

Table 4

Summary of Relevant Demographic Information of Participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age married</b>	<b>Years married</b>	<b>Years makhoti</b>	<b>Current marital status</b>
Cornelia	15	52	7	Married
Eugenia	19	3	3 weeks+	Married
Hilda	23	23	2 months	Married
Jean	26	10	9 months+	Married
Josephine	18	18	12	Separated
Judy	19	13	6	Married
Lillian	23	6 months	1+	Married
Lungiswa	19	21	2	Widowed
Maria	18	24	11	Married
Mary	19	17	8 months	Married
Mavis	19	9	11	Separated



Summary of Relevant Demographic Information of Participants (continued)

Name	Age married	Years married	Years makhoti	Current marital status
Monica	23	10	3 months	Married
Nombulelo	16	19	5 weeks	Married
Nomvuso	19	17	7	Separated
Nonzima	17	36	3	Married
Portia	18	16	6	Married
Phumza	22	19	2	Married
Rosa	18	14	4	Divorced
Violet	19	37	4	Married
Zoleka	20	7	7+	Married

Note. + = woman is still a makhoti, either full-time, or she returns to her family-in-law occasionally to fulfil duties of a makhoti.

The average age at which participants married is approximately 19.5 years, the average number of years married, approximately 18 years, and the average period of the makhoti-stage is approximately 4 years. Legal marriages may have preceded the cultural weddings which are indicated above.

#### **4.5. PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION**

Data collection in ethnographic research is a process rather than a single step. Emerging themes need to be revised several times as the researcher familiarises him or herself with various aspects of the topic through different sources. In this study, data was collected mainly through interviews with informants. It was done in three steps namely, the *grand*

*tour question*, the actual interviews and finally, the verification of results and the amendment of the report (discussed in section 5.4).

#### **4.5.1. Grand tour question**

The process of ethnographic research usually starts with a “grand tour” question (Hammersley, 1979). The purpose of such a question is to establish what the topic includes; both structurally and functionally.

In researching the abuse of the amakhoti, the grand tour question was: “What does being a makhoti entail?”. This question was put to two groups of people: firstly, to a group of Xhosa women and secondly, to two individuals who have had extensive contact with the Xhosa culture. The Xhosa women are community workers of the Mosaic Training, Service and Healing Centre for Women. The individuals who were interviewed were, Mr B. Basson, a Xhosa lecturer at the Huguenot College in Wellington for more than 15 years. Mr Basson has taken many field trips to the rural parts of the Ciskei and Transkei. The other was Mrs R. Wooding, who, together with her late husband, resided in the Transkei for thirty-seven years. Mrs Wooding has written books on the Xhosa folklore. The instruction to both groups was to introduce the researcher to various aspects of the makhoti-status in order that she may identify broad topics for the research; in particular the interviews with participants which were to follow. This step was also necessitated by the lack of literature on the subject.

As the study focused on abusive behaviour, the responses of the two groups were interpreted against the backdrop of the abusive tactics found in the Power and Control Wheel (see section 3.2). From these responses, it became apparent that there could be qualitative differences in the domestic abuse experienced by the Xhosa women and the abuse of women in a Western culture with regard to the following:



1. The typical behaviour of the husband and family of the makhoti that can be labelled as abusive or the types of abuse experienced
2. The social context of the abuse
3. Psychological aspects of abuse such as coping behaviour

This information influenced the contents of the interviews, the analysis and the format of the report of the investigation. During the interviews, certain pieces of information relating to the experiences of participants (e.g. whether she married the man of her choice and whether lobola was paid for her), the way it affected them (e.g. how they felt about leaving their first child behind at the home of their in-laws) as well as the way in which they dealt with the treatment, were elicited from participants purposefully.

The data was subsequently analysed in three steps which correspond to the above (see sections 5.3.1 - 5.3.3) and the format in which the results of this study are reported, also reflects the above preliminary indications.

#### **4.5.2. Interviews**

Following the initial discussions with the group and the individuals, semi-structured interviews with the twenty participants were conducted by the researcher. Each participant received an interview number based on the chronological order in which the interviews were conducted. The interviews covered the broad topics regarding the possible types of abuse experienced. The various types of abuse discussed in section 3.2., as well as information obtained from the preliminary interviews with the Mosaic group and Mr Basson and Mrs Wooding, were used as guidelines for the interviews. The broad topics which were used included: physical abuse (e.g. initiations, rituals and physical violence), sexual abuse, psychological abuse (e.g. verbal abuse, isolation, manipulation by using children and economic abuse) and other types of abuse (e.g. witchcraft and lobola).



With the written consent of the participants, the interviews were tape recorded and verbatim transcriptions subsequently made. These transcriptions were used as a basis for data analysis.

Hammersley (1979) emphasises the important part that the circumstances in which the interview is conducted, play in the data collection process. With this in mind, thirteen of the interviews were conducted in the offices of Mosaic, another six in the privacy of the researcher's office and one in the home of an interviewee. All the interviews were conducted in private, in a place where the women felt comfortable and where there was no possibility of being interrupted.

## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### 5.1. STRATEGIES AND METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The analysis of ethnographic data requires searching for “patterned regularities” (Creswell, 1998, p. 152). Participant’s accounts of their lives and experiences are elicited and analysis is focused on themes which emerge from these accounts. No matter how much guidance was sought in literature as to the frequency that would constitute an emerging theme, the concept remained evasive. Strauss (1988) states, “The core category must appear frequently in the data. (More precisely: The indicators pointing to the phenomena represented by the core category must appear frequently)” (p. 36). The frequency at which indicators appeared in the data is reported in each section of the results. The adequacy thereof (see section 4.3.) is to be determined by the reader.

Due to the differences in the nature of the three aspects of abuse (namely, types of abuse, social context of abuse and psychological abuse), each aspect required separate analysis. Specific strategies for the analysis of data have been discussed in section 4.3. A strategy of filling in of missing elements in existing literature or theory was used for the analysis of the social context of abuse as well as for the various types of abuse. This strategy makes provision for broad presupposed categories which can be used for the data analysis (Hammersley, 1979). This strategy was specifically chosen in anticipation of a different world view to what may be found in relevant literature.

The strategy of using existing theoretical models and applying them to the topic at hand was utilised for the analysis of the psychological context of abuse. The Cognitive Appraisal Theory of Lazarus (see section 5.2.) was applied in this case. This theory

provided both a theoretical model for coping behaviour, and a list of basic emotions which was used to place the emotions experienced by participants into context.

## 5.2. COGNITIVE APPRAISAL THEORY

In the Cognitive Appraisal Theory of Lazarus, emotion is considered to arise from the way in which an individual construes or appraises his or her ongoing transactions with the world (Lazarus, 1991). Lazarus distinguishes between feelings and emotions. Feelings have an element of bodily sensory perception (like pleasure or pain) while emotion is reserved for occasions on which there is an appraisal of harm or benefit (Power & Dalgleish, 1997). Cognitive appraisal occurs in two stages:

*Primary appraisal* refers to the initial evaluation of whether an encounter is stressful, irrelevant, positive or benign. The three primary appraisal components are: goal relevance, goal congruence/incongruence, and type of ego-involvement.

*Secondary appraisal* refers to the subsequent evaluation of coping skills and resources that may be available. The three secondary appraisal components are: blame/credit, coping potential and future expectancy.

The primary and secondary appraisal processes of a situation work in conjunction. If, for example, coping resources are seen to be adequate for a situation, the threat will not be deemed so significant. Secondary appraisal of coping processes can be categorised into emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping (Power & Dalgleish, 1997). Definitions of the process of primary and secondary appraisal can be applicable to any cultural frame of reference and will not interfere with the description of data.

Lazarus has identified a list of basic emotions which is used in this study for purposes of classifying emotions experienced by the participants. Cognisance is taken of the critique of



this list (Power & Dalgleish, 1997; Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 1990). It was, nonetheless, found quite useful for the purpose of describing the participants' emotions as these were not studied in great depth, but merely categorised. It was found that the list of Lazarus offered more variety than the list of Oatley and Johnson-Laird. Following is the list of basic emotions identified by Lazarus:

Anger:	A demeaning offence against me and mine
Anxiety:	Facing uncertain, existential threat
Fright:	Facing immediate, concrete and overwhelming physical danger
Guilt:	Having transgressed a moral imperative
Shame:	Not having lived up to ego-ideal
Sadness:	Having experienced an irrevocable loss
Envy:	Wanting what someone else has
Jealousy:	Resenting a third party for the loss of or threat of losing another's affection
Disgust:	Taking in or being too close to an indigestible object
Happiness:	Making reasonable progress towards the realisation of a goal
Pride:	Enhancement of one's ego-identity by taking credit for a valued object or achievement, either one's own or that of some group with whom one can identify
Relief:	A distressing goal-incongruent condition that has changed for the better or has gone away
Hope:	Fearing the worst, but yearning for better
Love:	Desiring or participating in affection, usually, but not necessarily reciprocated
Compassion:	Being moved by another's suffering and wanting to help

The basic emotions as described by Lazarus may vary in intensity and therefore be described with different words. 'Irritated' and 'furious' for example, are both expressions of anger. They can also be combined with other emotions, but according to Lazarus



(1991), basic emotions do not merge to become a complex emotion, but are rather experienced simultaneously.

Analysis of the emotional aspects of the abuse of the amakhoti was deemed relevant to this study for the insight it might provide into how the women reacted to and coped with the treatment they received. It could also possibly leave a suggestion as to the appropriate therapeutic intervention. It should be kept in mind that, in a sense, new ground is being broken by this research and that the emotional aspect of abuse may need to be researched in greater detail.

### **5.3. PROCEDURE OF DATA ANALYSIS**

In ethnographic research, analysis may even start at the choice of a topic, continuing through data collection, into the reporting phase of the research (Hammersley, 1979).

When data for this study was collected, as was indicated in section 4.5, it started with the initial explorative interviews with the Mosaic counsellors, Mrs Wooding and Mr Basson. Following these interviews, broad topics regarding the life and work of a makhoti (see section 4.5.2.) were inferred for the interviews with the twenty participants. Analysis can thus be said to have started at that early stage.

#### **5.3.1. Analysis of the types of abuse**

Transcriptions of the interviews were firstly searched for indicators of abusive treatment in any form. The following is an example of the indicators of the types of abuse as they manifested in the transcriptions:

*“And then as a makhoti... .. what I can say, the other thing that was so difficult: you had to stand up at 2 o’clock and you had to go to that tap. At about 10 o’clock... ..tired, tired, tired. (1) Even you don’t have a chance to wash yourself (2) and you don’t have a chance to sit down and eat. You have to stand eating, you can’t sit down and have a eat and you can’t as a makhoti. (3) Like I am telling my story, I couldn’t even go to town with my husband. My mother-in-law has to go to town to do the shopping. I couldn’t , I had to stay home and work all the time. (4) And I used to, you know.*

The above transcription indicates that the participant was subjected to the following types of abuse:

- (1) Abusive work practices
- (2) Neglect
- (3) Rituals
- (4) Limitation of freedom choice

The various indicators were categorised under the categories of abuse which were used as guidelines for the interviews (see section 4.5.2). When a participant indicated that she was physically attacked by any individual in her family-in-law during the time she served as a makhoti for example, her interview number would appear under that particular category. Some indicators of abusive practices did not fall under these categories. These indicators were grouped together and organised into provisional categories. After this process they were searched for a second time for any indicators which may have been overlooked. In accordance with the ethnographic process, organising themes (categories) which emerged through the above process were then labelled and defined.

The labels given to the emerging themes and their definitions follow:

Work Practices: Any excessive physical labour other than for own personal purpose.



Direct physical violence: Reference to hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing or any other form of physical maltreatment that caused physical injury or ill health.

Neglect: Denying an individual time for grooming and other personal matters, insufficient time to rest, and isolation from resources to sustain her person and personal routines.

Intercourse against the wishes of the wife: Reference to situations where physical force was used in sexual behaviour.

Control over sexuality: Reference to incidents where social pressure was put on a woman to agree to intercourse, having children or any aspect related to her sexuality.

Initiation, rituals and taboos: Reference to cultural symbols, events, rules and taboos that affirm the lesser position of a woman in the marriage, family and family-in-law.

Infidelity: Reference to extra-marital affairs of the husband.

Manipulation by using children: Reference to cultural practices which interfere with the guardianship of the mother over her children or any other aspect of the mother-child relationship.

Economic manipulation: Isolation of the woman from economic resources as well as excluding her from decision making regarding the appropriation of family income.

Verbal abuse: Subjecting the woman to vulgar language, accusations, degrading comments and insults, both in private and in public

Slander/spreading of rumours and interfering: Reference to incidents when the family-in-law discussed matters pertaining to the makhoti with other people without her knowledge or consent, spread false stories about her and interfered with the marital relationship.

Limitation of freedom:

Freedom of speech: Denying the woman the right to speak to certain persons, to air her views or defend herself verbally.

Freedom of choice: Denying the woman the right to uninhibited choice of action or association.

Freedom of movement: Denying the woman the right to move around freely; reference to containing the woman physically or otherwise.

Isolation: Reference to manipulation of access to social support and resources.

Privacy: Reference to denying the woman a secluded place for personal routine or invasion of such a place.

Unfair taking of sides: Reference to incidents where the family or family-in-law, (including the husband), opposed the woman where it defied good reason.

Witchcraft and accusations of witchcraft: Verbal attacks on the woman with specific reference to the practice of black magic, or approaching a witch doctor to cast a spell on the woman.

Name giving: Reference to the practice of giving a woman a new name when she enters into marriage.

Lobola: Reference to the practice of paying a bride's price to the family of a bride.

Interference with education and work: Reference to social pressure put on a woman to discontinue her education or work outside the home, for purposes of housekeeping for the family-in-law.

As a control measure, the interviews were then scrutinised a third time, with each indicator being evaluated against the definitions.

Themes such as giving of new names and lobola which can be seen as culture specific behaviour, were at this point labelled abusive for two reasons: firstly, several participants expressed strong negative sentiments towards these aspects of the makhoti-status and secondly, the treatment seemed to be related to a broader experience of denial of human dignity and rights as represented in the human rights documents (see section 2.2.).

### **5.3.2. Analysis of the emotional aspects of abuse**

When the analysis of the types of abuse had been completed, the transcriptions were searched for any emotion (in the definition of Lazarus) or coping skills related during the interviews. Raw data required the identification of emotions or coping skills which were disguised in expressions such as the following:

*"Nobody, well..... cares for me."*

and

*"It was a terrible thing. When I am thinking about that now I feel very bad and very angry, because I was really abused by all of them...."*

and



*“What I was thinking was that... ..he wanted me, that's why he was converted. Because he wanted to get me easy. Because he is also in the church.”*

All expressions of emotion were identified and evaluated against the definition of the different basic emotions of the Cognitive Appraisal Theory (see section 5.2.). The

context in which the emotions were expressed, were briefly noted as they related to specific situations and types of abuse. An example of this process is cited below:

Interview 4: *“I had to take another name... ..I was not happy, because what I was thinking was that it wasn't my choice.”*

Anger: Arranged marriage - limitation of freedom of choice.

Interview 17: *“Ooh, I was angry because I don't feel all right . All the people are sleeping at home, I am the only person that is awake. I must do everything. When they wake up, I must finish all the work here at home.”*

Anger: Harsh work practices.

The result was a list of emotions associated with specific types of abuse. Feelings of frustration, disappointment, confusion, helplessness and ambivalence, although repeatedly demonstrated, are not regarded as emotions, according to Lazarus (1991), and are thus excluded from this list. Authors such as Matsumoto (1996) and Russell (1991) call attention to the fact that emotions in various cultures may have very different meanings, labels, may be experienced and perceived differently and may, in fact, evoke quite different response in relationships. Other research (e.g. Ekman and Heider, 1988) have suggested that certain emotions can be seen as universal. Seven such emotions have been identified:



anger, fear, disgust, happiness, sadness, surprise and contempt (Matsumoto, 1992). It was felt that a detailed discussion in this regard falls outside the scope of the study.

In an attempt to increase the reliability of the analysis of the results of this study, a qualified counselling and research psychologist was requested to do the same in ten interviews picked at random (see “peer group checking”, section 4.3.1). The process of the analysis of data was explained to him and examples from one interview analysed together. He subsequently compiled a list similar to that of the researcher which is discussed above. As a final step in this process, the two lists were compared and integrated.

### **5.3.3. Analysis of the social context of abuse**

When both the analysis of the types of abuse and the emotional aspects of abuse had been completed, the interviews were searched once again for patterned regularities indicating any aspect relevant to the social context of the abusive treatment.

From the literature review on the Xhosa family, it became apparent that the involvement of the extended family in the choice of a marital partner and residence in the home of the family-in-law affected the lives of the amakhoti. The analysis of the various forms that abuse take in the life of the makhoti, suggested that specific individuals in the extended family indulged in specific types of abuse. These themes started emerging before an analysis was made of the social aspects of the treatment that the amakhoti receive. Various reasons for staying in the relationship, as well as indicators referring to expectations with regard to marital life, were found by reading through the transcriptions.. A culturally prescribed method in dealing with problems was also referred to in various interviews, but subsequent to this analysis, was incorporated in the section on coping behaviour (see section 6.2.3).

The interviews were read through for a second time in order to find indicators relevant to the following social context related themes:

- Residential pattern
- Choice of partner
- Patterns of perpetration
- Reasons for staying in the relationship
- Problem solving
- Expectations of marital life

Different aspects of these themes were noted in order to describe the role that each played in the abusive treatment that the amakhoti received. Expectations of marital life were seen to reflect psychological aspects of abuse and were subsequently discussed in section 6.2.1.

#### **5.4. VERIFYING DATA**

Following the analysis of the transcriptions of the interviews, a preliminary report of data analysis was compiled and the following measures were taken to ensure the accuracy (and therefore the validity) of the results: Firstly, the report was discussed with the participants at a meeting arranged for this purpose (see “member checking”, section 4.3). Each woman was given a copy of her transcribed interview and of the report. The arranging of the data into the various types of abuse, as well as findings with regard to the social and psychological context of abuse, were discussed. Participants were afforded the opportunity to comment on the accuracy of the descriptions and to elaborate on what they had said or felt during the interviews. They were also given the opportunity to reconsider their consent to have specific quotations from their interviews used to support findings. Secondly, the preliminary report was also triangulated to Mrs R. Miller (the director of Mosaic Training, Service and Healing Centre for Women who has been supervising and counselling the Mosaic community workers for the past two years) and Mrs I. Ford (a



Xhosa teacher at a private secondary school and former missionary in the Transkei). Comments on the accuracy of descriptions and additions to the report, were assimilated in the final report.

Apart from the methods employed above to increase validity, the method of peer group checking was also employed in the analysis of the emotional aspects of abuse, by having a research psychologist analyse ten of the interviews as a control measure. In reporting the results, direct quotations from the transcription of the interviews were used in an attempt to avoid subjective interpretation of the stories and feelings of the participants, thereby increasing the validity of the descriptions.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **RESULTS**

The results of the study are discussed under the three headings mentioned in section 4.5.1 namely: the various types of abuse experienced by the amakhoti, the psychological aspects of the treatment (which include expectations of marital life, emotions expressed by participants and coping behaviour) and matters pertaining to the social context thereof.

#### **6.1. TYPES OF ABUSE EXPERIENCED BY PARTICIPANTS**

The types of abuse that the amakhoti experience are discussed under the four headings referred to in section 4.5.2. These are: physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse and other types of abuse which bear specific relevance to the life of the amakhoti as an aspect of Xhosa culture. The frequencies indicated in this section refer to the number of participants who indicated that they were subjected to a particular type of abuse.

##### **6.1.1. Physical abuse**

###### **6.1.1.1. Work practices**

Work practices, as a category of abusive treatment, featured in all of the participants' history as amakhoti (n = 20).

Work practices in the traditional arena have already been discussed. It is evident from all descriptions of the cultural practices of the Xhosa that a woman's capabilities as a worker are highly valued and are taken into consideration when a man is looking for a wife

(Ngesi, 1994; Siqwana-Ndlulo, 1993). The makhoti is clearly at the bottom of the social chain and conveniently the one who is denied the right to refuse any request as far as housework is concerned.

This seems to be the main area of conflict between the amakhoti and mothers-in-law. It was reported in various cases ( $n = 5$ ) that the mother-in-law had reservations about the makhoti based on the belief that city girls cannot cope with the work required of a makhoti. This is also one of the aspects of being a makhoti that the entire family exploits. Stories were told of sisters-in-law bringing their children to be looked after, fed and groomed by the makhoti while the sister-in-law visited friends.

When a household does not have the luxury of the services of a makhoti, the work is done by the mother and daughters. They seem, however, to be much more demanding of a makhoti than of themselves. The expectation that a makhoti should not work outside the home is discussed in section 6.1.4.4. It suffices to say that the makhoti is expected to be in and around the house constantly and to cater for every need of the rest of the household.

The following excerpts from the transcriptions clearly illustrate this aspect of the makhoti-status:

● *“And then as a makhoti what I can say the other thing that was so difficult for you had to stand up at 2 o'clock and you had to go to that [water point]..... at about 10 o'clock tired, tired, tired. Even you don't have a chance to wash yourself and you don't have a chance to sit down and eat. You have to stand eating, you can't sit down and have a eat..... you can't as a makhoti.” - Jean*

● *“And another thing you must do is the washing. When you do your husband's washing, you must do her [Mother-in-law] washing also. You are not supposed to work. Stay at home ..... look after the sister-in-law's children..... do all the washing, everything..... like a slave.” - Judy*



An interesting observation was made with regard to work practices: In several cases (n = 5) it was reported that the family-in-law (and particularly the mother-in-law) took it upon themselves to make life just a little more difficult for the makhoti in her work around the home.

- *“You don’t use stove. If you’ve done that, they call you names like... they are talking behind you..... you can’t. There are stoves, there are people like the sister-in-law and mother-in-law who are using that. You as a makhoti can’t use that paraffin stove. So you must make fire all the time and you must fetch.... But I never do that..... the wood because their forest is far. I never do that... it is only that cow shit.” - Jean*

- *“So from the very onset when I went to the kitchen, they locked all the cupboards. There were no dishes, no food. They expected me to prepare food for them but the cupboards were locked. And I asked my mother-in-law “And now, what do I do now?”, because I did buy some dishes and my mom also gave me some, but they were in my new house. So I didn’t bring them with. She didn’t tell me that I should bring the dishes with and she locked the cupboards. ....no food no nothing..... I only saw the stove and the pots. Then I ask her, “From where must I do the tea....where must I put the cakes....there is nothing” and when I look in the groceries cupboard, it was empty there was nothing ....no tea no sugar, nothing.” - Monica*

The one thing that bothers women most about the practice (n = 7) is that the minute a makhoti enters the home, everybody else sits back and leaves the entire household for her to manage. This task, in fact, starts on the evening of the wedding. After all the guests have departed, the new makhoti is left with the dishes and house to clean up.

- *“She was enjoying to her makhoti because she was getting fat and she was getting a nice complexion....she was really comfortable. And she would brag to everyone: “See I am looking nice, I have got makhoti”. Meantime I was suffering.” - Monica*

The husband typically does the same ( $n = 6$ ). He is expected to refrain from assisting her with her tasks while they are still residing with his parents.

● *“He can’t help me. If he can help me, the others will shout him... .. the father-in-law shout. So he can’t help. But where we live, he can help me.”* - Lillian

#### 6.1.1.2. Direct physical violence

Physical violence in the Xhosa culture is well documented by all the literature that was consulted. Violence seems to be acceptable as long as the hierarchical order of the parties is not disturbed, so one is allowed to physically coerce anyone with a lower status than oneself. Men are allowed to physically punish their wives, as long as an explanation can be given for this. When a man hits his wife and she complains to her family, the husband can be fined with an ox (or for the value of an ox in cash) by her father if he cannot prove her guilt (Wilson, 1981). This practice seems to be linked to the deeply rooted idea that women are owned.

● *“Yes, you can’t beat your man, the husband must.....you are like a child to him. And he will also say that “You are my child .....and to do whatever I like with you, I’ve lobola’ed you”. Because of that lobola, they take advantage of that. You are his property.”* - Nonzima

It is also not uncommon for women to be beaten by men other than their husbands for reasons ranging from talking too much to disregarding hlonipa rules (Wilson, 1981). The endorsement of violence against one’s own wife is not unique to the Xhosa culture, but has been part of the evolution of human rights in Western culture as well (Straus, 1976).



In cases where physical violence was found ( $n = 7$ ), the husband was usually the offender. In one case the relatives of the husband joined in and in another, her own family. In the latter case, the violence was related to the fact that the woman had eloped, and her bridegroom had failed to initiate the lobola negotiations. The context of this incident bears relevance to the discussion in section 3.4.3.

It is not so much the incidence of physical violence in the marriage that is alarming but the fact that it seems to be endorsed by the culture.

● *“A lot. Even one day, when I was pregnant..... three months pregnancy, my husband kicked me and I got an abortion to lose the baby.*

*Joo, if there is the something he just call them all. One day he beat me with his friends. Then I was so tired because when somebody abuse you, every time you have to fight back. .... come his brother and they were beating me all of them. I was really angry because I've got my first daughter..... Have to fight with the family because all of them they will pack me,... beat me all. Because you have no right to lift your hand to your husband. That is our culture. The husband's got the right to do everything.” - Josephine*

#### **6.1.1.3. Neglect**

The physical neglect of the makhoti, does not bear relevance to a specific custom or practice, but is a result of the work practices inflicted upon her. The makhoti's time, whether she is working outside the home or whether she is a homemaker to the family-in-law, is devoted to serving others to such an extent that she has little time for herself. In this study thirteen participants reported neglect in one or other form.



● *"I couldn't even wash myself. I must just wake up because I can't take all my clothes and give a nice bath, otherwise they will call me: I am a mistress, so I am a mistress so I am not doing like the other makhoti's are doing. So ...and eventually I had lice, you know... because I didn't even have a time to wash my hair. I had to sleep with that doekie, because I can't sleep with a bare head. I couldn't sleep with that bare head as a makhoti and then I had these lice because of always all the time the doekie was on my head so I had .... My head was full of lice. And then you can't say anything."* - Jean

The makhoti holds the lowest position in the social hierarchy of the family so she is also the one of whom it is expected to make all the sacrifices, even if it means that she has to forfeit her portion of food or her bed. The neglect described by the participants was never life threatening, but has affected their relationships with their husbands and families-in-law.

● *"Of course, dit is presies. As jy opgeskep het en daar is nie genoeg nie, dan moet jy maar honger ly, unless jou man is daar dan kan hy van sy kos nou oorskiet vir jou, dan moet jy maar sy oorskiet eet."* - Cornelia

[Of course, exactly. If you dish out food and there is not enough, you are the one to go hungry. Unless your husband is willing to spare some of his food for you, then you can eat his leftovers.]

### 6.1.2. Sexual abuse

Under the topic of sexual abuse, intercourse against the wishes of the woman is discussed; as well as the woman's lack of control over her own sexuality. The former may constitute marital rape, but is not referred to as such due to the fact that none of the women has ever laid charges against their husbands and the fact that marital rape has only recently been recognised as a form of rape (Family Violence Act, 1993).

Control over sexuality may be deemed a special case of limitation of freedom of choice. It is discussed under this section, because it bears relevance to the sexual aspect of marriage.

### 6.1.2.1. Intercourse against the wishes of the wife

The authority of men in the Xhosa tradition, as discussed in section 3.4.2., used to be unchallenged and generalised to most aspects of life in the tribal village. This also applied to his authority over the sexuality of his wife. It was the duty of the woman to have sex with her husband. He could demand it at any stage even if it involved using physical force (Jonas, 1972; Van der Waal, 1996). This perception seems to have prevailed despite declarations such as Article 8 of the Women's Charter (see Appendix). In this study nine participants reported incidents in which they were forced to have intercourse with their husbands.

In cases where the marriage was not the choice of the woman ( $n = 7$ ), this violation of her sexual integrity was experienced as particularly traumatic. Reactions to this violation ranged from fear to resentment. Considering the young ages at which some women were married, as well as the (Christian) religious convictions of some of the participants regarding virginity, this may have an impact on the marital satisfaction and self-esteem of a woman for a long time thereafter.

● *"Yes, yes, because what was happening that time: I didn't want to sleep with him because he's got a lover. So I didn't. So what he did, he didn't say anything for three days. But after three days he asked me that if I did get a nice sex to the men that I said there is a lot. And then I said, "Just like you, because you have enough from your girlfriend." And then he begin to beat me again. And then we were fighting and fighting and he just take my arms and he tied my arms with a belt and he slept with me." - Zoleka*

● *"Ek sê "Nee, man, jy moet nie so maak nie." Ek begin baklei saam met die man. Ek wil nie hy moet vir my vasvat nie. En die man vat vas vir my. Dan begin hy saam met my te slaap. Ek sê mos: "Ai, begin nou ander ding maak". Oe, ek so baie bang." - Violet*  
[I tell him: "No! Don't do that". I start struggling. I don't want him to hold me down, but he does. Then he starts to have sex with me. I tell myself: "We have started another thing". I was very scared.]

When the preliminary report of the study was discussed with the participants, two stories which were reported to the Mosaic counsellors, were related. In both cases guards were placed outside the bedroom doors of couples to make sure that they were having sex. If the guards were not satisfied with what they perceived the situation to be, it was reported to the fathers-in-law. In one case the father-in-law was said to rape the young bride in front of the husband in order to show him how to have proper intercourse with a woman. In the other case, the father-in-law and brothers-in-law reportedly came into the bedroom and explained to the husband what was to be done. He subsequently tried out their advice in their presence.

#### 6.1.2.2. Control over sexuality

Control over sexuality differs from intercourse against the wishes of the wife in that physical force is not used, but the husband manipulates the wife by threatening and verbally abusing her in order that she may agree to his sexual demands ( $n = 5$ ). This type of abuse may be linked to the high priority that the engendering of children is given in the Xhosa community (see Table 1, p. 7).

● *“If I am going to tell my husband “No, man, I am tired today”, he will be very angry. You’ve got no right to say you are tired, you don’t need to sleep with him, because you are tired. You have to allow him. If he want to wake you up at night , you have to give him. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday... whenever he wants to sleep with you. But if you don’t feel you want to sleep with him, you don’t have those feelings that you want to sleep with him, it’s not okay for you to sleep with him, but he will just give you a name, “Yes, you’ve got an affair, you’ve got somebody that satisfy you. That’s why you don’t want to sleep with me.”” - Josephine*



Other family members were also involved in putting pressure on the woman to make decisions regarding her sexuality (n = 12). This included putting social pressure on women to bear children.

● *“... .. and I was not having a child that time. And then she [sister-in-law] said, “When are you going to have a child, because here we need childs only... we need children in this family. Nobody can come here without a child”. And then I was very angry.” - Zoleka*

● *“It was just like something that I had to do by force ... .. fall pregnant” - Lungiswa*

In the light of the above, it comes as no surprise that barrenness is viewed in a very serious light. In the event of a woman dying without leaving children, tradition prescribes that the lobola which the widower paid, has to be returned to him (Russel, 1995). The father of a barren woman is also held responsible for the costs involved in ‘curing’ the woman until she has borne a child. It is, of course, always assumed that the problem lies with the woman if a couple is childless (Wilson, 1981). None of the participants was childless, but it was felt that this was a potentially abusive aspect of the marital relationship.

● *“And what happens, we were four makhoti’s. I am the third one. Now the eldest one ... .. this one hasn’t got a child, and she was eighteen years that time as makhoti, eighteen years. What is happening to her... in the summertime, we used to plough, mos. So what is happening, she must come out because she is a cattle. So she pulls the plough... .. Yes, she must go and plough because all the cattle are outside. So why is she inside the house? Because they call her an ox” - Zoleka*

It appears that a more open attitude towards reasons for barrenness may be adopted today and that medical help is sought (n = 3 ).

● *“He [husband] used to asked me. My mother-in-law asked me one day “When are you having another baby?” and I said “I don’t know”. And she said “You must go for a womb scrape so that I can have another children. Maybe there is a problem in your womb.”. I said “No, there is no problem because I have been to the doctor and the doctor said there is nothing wrong with me. Maybe it will take long”” - Judy*

### **6.1.3. Psychological abuse**

#### **6.1.3.1. Initiation, rituals and taboos**

Some aspects of this topic have been discussed in section 2.4. In this study it was found that there were still markedly strong links between the participants who reside in the urbanised areas of the Western Cape and those who reside in the rural areas. The associated rituals and taboos are also similar. Most of the women who were interviewed still have family in either the Transkei or Ciskei and many of them (n = 16) have spent time there as amakhoti after their weddings. The majority of the women (n = 18) still visit there during the festive season. All of the participants were familiar with the initiation ceremonies, rituals and taboos associated with the makhoti-status and only in two cases, eating taboos were not observed during the makhoti phase. All of the participants (n = 20) reported to have observed the hlonipa rules.

According to the participants the physical exposure to rituals, initiations and observing of the hlonipa rules, is not what makes the infliction thereof abusive, but rather the constant avoidance of punitive measures which follow non-conformation. These include physical violence, verbal abuse or being sent back home (in which case the father of the bride must return the lobola or pay a fine for her behaviour).

● *“O, it was a terrible day, the very first day. Because when you are makhoti, first they must introduce you to the family because I didn’t get married in a white wedding. What happened is that they slaughter a sheep and then they cook outside in that big dirty pots. The time my husband’s family is preparing the food, that time I am sitting there on the floor .... I don’t know what you call it, we call it a Ikhuko. Then you sit there with a long skirt and an apron on top and the towel around the waist and a big blanket and a rug. You must not look directly to you in-laws ever. Then they talk to you and tell you all the rules what they like and don’t like and what you must do.*

*They talk and talk and talk to you and after they dish out the food. All the dishes you must wash and you cannot take that blanket off.” - Judy*

● *“So I wasn’t supposed to be near him [father-in-law], I was always... if he is coming this way, I must stand aside so that he can pass. And I have to have all my things on. He mustn’t see me without my doekie or my rug on my shoulders.... Even in that early hours of the morning, I had to wash myself, not to wear a gown and make some tea with a gown on. Had to wash and wear all my clothes.” - Nonzima*

Strictly speaking, demanding or expecting respect is not by definition an abusive act (see section 2.1.). The knowledge of these demands does, however, have an impact on the woman’s psychological health and development. This notion does not fall under any of the other categories of abuse. Walker (1984) lists implicit threats of violence as one of six types of psychological violence as was seen to be the case with these demands. No overt threats of violence were reported in cases where respect was not shown, and only two women reported to have faced disciplinary action (sent back to parents) for not observing the hlonipa (respect) rules. It was, however, clear that the women knew that they were making life easier for themselves by showing respect.



● “...jy weet, jy moet nou vriendelik wees en jy moet maar onder lê, al maak hulle wat. Jy moet maar onderdanig wees. So as hulle dit nou sien, dan kry hulle nou nie baie kans nie om met jou sleg te werk nie. Maar die ding is nou tussen jou en jou skoonmense... .. jy moet nou baie goed wees met hulle. Jy moet amper jou laaste vir hulle ook gee. As hulle nou die baadjie wil hê, dan moet jy dit maar gee.” - Cornelia

[...you know, you must be friendly and you have to lie down, no matter what. You have to be . So when they see that, they can't be rude to you. That is how it works between you and you family-in-law ..... you have to be good to them. You should almost be prepared to give your last possessions to them. If they want your jacket, you have to give it to them]

● “But if there is people here at home, you can talk to him to respect him..... 100% respect must be given” - Lillian

#### 6.1.3.2. Infidelity

The problem of infidelity by the husband is not unique to the makhoti period, but continues thereafter as well. It is known to be a practice among men (Ramphele, 1994; Russel, 1996) but according to Ngesi (1994) only endorsed today by men themselves. Junod (1933) stipulates the taboo regarding a man having intercourse with his wife while she is breastfeeding her baby as the origin of the endorsement of extra-marital affairs (which is, of course, not extra-marital in a polygamous marriage).

The assumed right of the man to have extra-marital affairs, seems to be included in the 'total authority' package of the man and the woman bears the consequences of challenging this right. In this study, the husbands of eight of the participants have reportedly been unfaithful to them on one or more occasions.

● “...my husband, when he started having an affair, I spoke to my mother-in-law. And she said “No, this was done long time already. Our grandfather and your father were doing the same thing.” So it is natural, I don’t have to confront and express my feelings to my husband. I must just leave it like that. So when I asked my husband, he was furious and he start beating me because he knew that my mother-in-law was on his side. He doesn’t want me to confront him” - Judy

● “....when your husband sleeps out, when he comes home, don’t ask him. You must give him a warm water and a cup of tea and you must make food for him. Don’t ask anything about sleeping around. It is not your business” - Portia

Notwithstanding this, the women were in some cases (n = 5) not even allowed to be seen talking to other men in public.

#### **6.1.3.3. Manipulation of children**

As stated in section 3.4.2, the strong emphasis on the rights of the paternal lineage leads to the belief that the children borne in wedlock belong to the family of the husband. It was clear from the interviews that these beliefs are still in place. On the other hand, children borne out of wedlock are seen as belonging to the family of the wife. Even if the woman does marry the father of the child/children later on, these children stay with the family of the woman or may join the parents in their home after an agreement has been reached concerning compensation (Siqwana-Ndlulo, 1993). The family of the husband will never accept these children as their own or allow them to stay in their home as long as their parents reside with the grandparents (the in-laws).

In most instances (n = 11) in this study, the children were taken with the parents when they moved out of the home of the grandparents. It was, however, deemed necessary to mention this as an area of potential abuse in the context of the total deprivation of rights

that the amakhoti experience. In the cases of five of the participants, children were left with family or family-in-law according to the customary prescription.

● *"...my child was staying with my parents, because that is what happened... must happen. When you get a child before marriage, the child doesn't belong to you and your husband, it belongs to my family. Even the surname of my child is my own surname [maiden name]... that means that he doesn't belong here. So when I got married, I left my child with my own parents.*

*Was that okay for you?*

*It was not okay. It was not okay because my child was still small... it was not okay."* - Judy

● *"So if I have got a child, my first child is not my child, it belongs to them [family-in-law]. So if I am leaving my husband, I must leave her.*

*Did it happen in your case.. did you leave your child there?*

*Yes, my first child is there with them.*

*Still?*

*Yes, she only comes for holidays to me. And she don't know that I am her mother. She call me "Sisi" [sister]. Her mother is my mother-in-law."* - Zoleka

Another element of the manipulation of children that affects the women indirectly, is the inequitable treatment that children receive when they have different fathers. Russel (1995) found that when children of the same mother have different fathers, they are likely to experience different levels of material wellbeing. A man will provide better for his own



children than for half-siblings who can depend only on their mother and her kin. This correlates with stories told by the participants in this study (n = 8).

#### 6.1.3.4. Economic manipulation

Economic deprivation is one of the types of abuse that starts when a Xhosa woman becomes a makhoti and which continues into later stages of marital life. The situation is particularly unfavourable for the makhoti when one considers that in most cases she is not allowed to work outside the home (see section 6.1.4.4.). If the makhoti resides with her family-in-law while her husband works elsewhere, she is left at the mercy of the mother-in-law. In this study seventeen women reported incidents indicating that they were economically abused either by the mother-in-law and other members of the household or by their husbands during their time serving as a makhoti.

● *“The first time my husband..... when he wants to send me money, he must take his money to his mother’s name. Maybe if..... I’ve got a baby that time..... if I asked..... if I said I had no things like toiletries, she will go and buy a big bottle of Vaseline. But she knows that I am not using Vaseline, I use Dawn and Ponds for my face, but she only bought Vaseline and Blouseep or Sunlight. There was no roll-on. So I tell my husband. I report about all these things. He said to me no, her mother never do that and he can’t send me money in my name. He will give her mother the money and then her mother must give me the money. So when my husband send me money in my name..... ooh, she was so angry.” - Portia*

Even if she does work, the makhoti is not the master of her hard earned money.

● *“When I come from work on Friday, I have to put my money on the table. My husband have to tell me what to do about that money. He is the only one that has to hold the money. I have to beg for anything.” - Josephine*



The makhoti is also expected to buy things for her family-in-law with the money she receives from her husband or earns herself. This must not be seen in isolation but in the context of financial support rendered by the family members to each other. Russel (1995) found that less pressure is put on daughters than on sons to support their parents. Unfortunately it seems as if this is done at the expense of the makhoti.

● *“Then I was still having this problem of wanting to go to my house because what was happening is that I was also working and I was not able to buy goods for my house. I was spending all my money in groceries because they expected me to feed them because I was the only one that was preparing supper all the time. So I had to see that there is everything there. I wouldn’t ask her for money for groceries, I had to sit with that ...their cupboards are full. I am not going to ask any one of them to give me money for food. So I was a bit frustrated.” - Monica*

Withholding access to financial resources, as is seen in section 6.1.3.8, also inhibits the woman’s freedom to leave the abusive situation.

#### **6.1.3.5. Verbal abuse**

Verbal abuse may include the use of obscene language, insults, threats or degrading comments. The makhoti is verbally abused by almost everybody in the household. She is not even allowed to reprimand a child, however young, for using obscene language or insulting her (Wilson, 1981). Much of the abuse is related to her work in the home and her observation of hlonipa rules. Verbal abuse in some or other form was reported by fourteen of the participants.

● *“ooh, when somebody... when somebody use verbal words, they say they don't sit. Ooh those are the things that kill you emotionally because you hold those things..... You hear when somebody was just saying those words to you: “You are a bitch, you are...”*

*everything. They kill you very slowly , because you don't understand what is happening when they just call you this names. When you are just thinking they come..... they also affect your head. Because of the psychological abuse sometimes you can't sleep at night. Because everything was just talking at you..... just repeating again and again” - Josephine*

#### **6.1.3.6. Slander/spreading of rumours and interfering**

Closely linked to verbal abuse, is slandering the makhoti, spreading of rumours and interfering. According to the participants, one of the reasons given for the restriction of friendship between married and unmarried women, is to avoid the discussion of private marital affairs and bad-mouthing the family-in-law. It seems to pass unnoticed that the makhoti is often the victim of such behaviour. Eighteen of the participants reported to have heard rumours spread about them or found that the mother-in-law or sister-in-law were secretly (or not) bearing a grudge against them or had reservations about the marriage.

● *“... and they skinner [spread rumours]. Like they don't ..if you are doing, you know, if you are doing something wrong , they don't tell you. They will just tjoep, tjoep, tjoep [talk behind your back]” - Jean*



- *“..... so my mother-in-law was here in Cape Town. So she said to my husband he must leave me alone, because she doesn't like me. So he said to her “I am not going to leave Mavis, Mavis is my wife”. Then my mother-in-law said: “Please, man”. Her son doesn't want, so she said “Okay, don't tell Mavis I said that to you” But my sister-in-law tell me, my mother [in-law] was saying that to my husband. I feel so bad .....so sad I heard those things because when she is sitting next to me she act like she likes me.” - Mavis*

It is evident from the interviews that in general, there are good mother-child relationships between both the amakhoti and their mothers and their husbands, his siblings and the mothers-in-law. Unfortunately this led to situations where husbands (n = 5) allowed their mothers and sisters to interfere with the marriage. The interfering behaviour ranged from eavesdropping to advice on what the husband's reaction to household problems ought to be.

- *“He was a sweet person, but his mother was in his life... I don't know. She kept told her what must she do... what must he....She was such a person” - Rosa*

#### **6.1.3.7. Limitation of freedom**

The young Xhosa girl grows up seeing what the treatment of the makhoti is and knows that this is her destiny. She sees and hears which sanctions accompany non-conformation and learns how to avoid them, long before she becomes a makhoti herself. True to her culture (see section 1.5) she accepts this fate without questions. In most instances, the women in this study could not explain why any particular behaviour was expected or give reasons for punitive measures.

Three kinds of limitations imposed on the makhoti will be discussed.

#### 6.1.3.7.1. Limitation of freedom of speech

Over and above the hlonipa taboos (when they have been lifted) of talking to the father-in-law or mother-in-law, the makhoti is not supposed to express her opinion or challenge the authority of her mother-in-law, father-in-law and in some cases, the brother-in-law. Although it is clear that the personalities of the makhoti and her in-laws also influence the situation, the makhoti may run the risk of sanctions when she dares to speak freely. Eighteen of the participants reported that they have been told to keep their opinion to themselves or to have faced the consequences of talking back.

● *“There is a time they [family-in-law] are talking hard and fast and shout you: “Why you don’t do this, why don’t you do that?” And you must not shout him [husband]. He has the right to shout you, but you don’t have the right to shout him.” - Lillian*

● *“..... he’ll tell you: “I’m going to beat you, because that is my mother . You have no right to open your mouth to my mother”. You have to take like that.” - Josephine*

#### 6.1.3.7.2. Limitation of freedom of choice

The makhoti’s (n = 20) freedom of choice is limited in various ways. The most evident way in which the participants’ freedom of choice was limited, was in the choice of a marital partner (n = 8). When a woman did agree to marry a man, they had little say in the choice of wedding date and form that the wedding may take. Two of the subjects reported that they were not ready to tie the knot with their boyfriends and were taken by surprise when their sisters-in-law brought them their makhoti outfits. This outfit signals the start of the wedding process.

Other ways in which freedom of choice was inhibited ranged from trivial matters such as, preferred food and decisions regarding personal hygiene to more important matters such as, decisions regarding spacing of children, finances and the choice not to return to an abusive relationship. Friendships between married women and unmarried men and women are strongly prohibited. Friendships between couples seem to be favoured. As was the case with the limitation of freedom of speech, the participants could seldom provide a reason for their limitation of freedom of choice. The reason provided for the discouragement of friendships between married and unmarried women was to prevent the discussion of marital affairs. Once again the notion of the wife as the property of the husband surfaces, as well as the sovereign rights of the paternal family. Challenging these rights was not even considered as an option by the participants.

● “.....*I remember that when my husband beat me, I went home. And then my husband's uncle went to my parents place and they said that they had come to fetch me. And we have to talk about what happened, and eventually my husband... my father would say “There is nothing that I can do, my child, you have to go back” So even if I am crying, they wouldn't say anything, I have to go. So I had to go.*” - Nonzima

● “..... *other mamas from the neighbourhood came to give me words like “Now you are married, you mustn't shout when you are talking, you mustn't like...have girl friends, you know. You must have marriage..... all people that are married as friends. You can't now be friends with the friend you had when you were unmarried.*” - Phumza

● “*I had no money, I had no bankbook. Because when you married, you can't have your own bankbook that your husband doesn't know. Your husband must know everything. You cannot even use contraceptives when you are makhoti*” - Judy



● *“When I get married with my husband, I used...before I get married, I liked make-up, lipstick...I liked to make myself beautiful I had to stop those things....he didn't want me to use those things any more. Escamel...you know the escamel cream for my face? He took it away... .. give it away, didn't want me to use that.*

*Why is that?*

*Because it doesn't suit him.” - Phumza*

### 6.1.3.7.3. Limitation of freedom of movement

It is customary for a makhoti to stay with her family-in-law for the first couple of months without being allowed to see her own family (Jonas, 1972). A makhoti is also supposed to communicate with few people other than the family-in-law (see section 6.1.3.8). The following examples prove that the makhoti is even physically restrained in some cases. She is expected to be in the home physically with her services available to the family-in-law twenty-four hours a day. Sixteen of the participants indicated that their freedom of movement was limited while they were amakhoti.

● *“And she [mother-in-law] didn't want me to go and see my mother. So I had to cry... .. I had to cry if I want to go to see my mother.” - Nonzima*

● *“Even if she wanted to ran, she couldn't ran because there were bodyguards. Wherever she is going, people are watching her. If she goes to the loo, if she goes to the river, around the house... .. people are watching her.” - Nombulelo*

● *“You are like in prison when you are staying with the in-laws. You are like in prison in that old days” - Judy*

### 6.1.3.8. Isolation

Freedom of movement, as does freedom of choice and speech, ties in with the topic of isolation. Isolation is discussed separately because the researcher is of the opinion that it represents a specific aspect of the limitation of freedom of choice and movement as imposed by both the family-in-law and the makhoti's own family.

Isolation, in this sense, refers specifically to isolation from social support. The makhoti is not only cut off from the outside world; in the home she is also excluded from family discussions, decisions and general interaction ( $n = 17$ ). The little comfort that the husband's presence can provide for the makhoti, was denied in four cases where the family-in-law asked the husbands to leave. The husbands were sent back home to where they worked while the makhoti had to stay.

● *“Jy mag eintlik nie, daai is die grootste. Jy mag eintlik nie communicate nie.....jy moenie.....jy moet net met jou skoonmense. Die geloof is jy moet net met jou skoonmense.....”* - Cornelia

[You are not supposed to, that is the big thing. You are not supposed to communicate..... only with your in-laws. It is believed that you should only talk to your in-laws....]

● *“No, the only ones that I can speak to were the other makhoti's when we go and fetch some water and woods”* - Nomvuso

● *“Then you put the food.....prepare the food for them, dish out for them. Don't look straight at them and you eat in the kitchen alone...because there is nobody in the kitchen. You can't sit with your in-laws.*

*It makes you feel bad because you are not used to that, you are used to sit in the table with the family when it is lunch,...supper time.”* - Judy

#### **6.1.3.9. Intrusion and denial of privacy**

The lack of privacy added to the misery of thirteen participants during their time as makhoti. Privacy must be seen in the context of the Xhosa home where there is generally little privacy. Often the homes in the Transkei and Ciskei do not have rooms, but consist of a hut in which the entire family sleeps until the brothers get married and eventually have their own huts (Elliot, 1970). Most of the participants (n = 15) were living in urban areas before they became makhotis and were accustomed to having private bathrooms and bedrooms.

Privacy was reported to be a problem not only in the context of grooming, but also in the private sphere where husband and wife converse and, of course, conduct their sexual affairs. In three cases the participants reported spending the first few weeks as a married couple sharing a room with the sister-in-law.

● “..... *I had no privacy. I was outside.... sitting outside, washing myself outside. Just to say “Okay, maybe God will see one day”. It was really terrible*” - Maria

#### **6.1.3.10. Unfair taking of sides**

It became evident from the interviews that an element of the social isolation is that the family-in-law and family of the makhoti take the side of the husband in marital feuds, no matter what the issue. Whether the concept of hierarchy in the family and community plays a part, can only be speculated upon, but the fact remains that any complaint from the makhoti about her husband or any other member of the family-in-law, is always dealt with, with suspicion. Seventeen of the participants had to deal with this frustration.



● *“He is a good person when you look at him. So they don’t believe me. My mother and brothers don’t believe me when I am having problems. They say it is me who provoked him” - Zoleka*

● *“Ja, hulle kies sy kant al is hy verkeerd. Jy wat makhoti is kan nou net nie...wat kan jy maak? Dan as jy gaan water skep of toilet toe gaan, dan moet jy maar daar huil en huil, jou traantjies self daar afvee en dan voel jy mos baie hartseer, want jou man is mos nou nie jou kant nie en die mense... dan huil jy en huil jy. Dan vee jy maar die traantjies af en dan kom jy maar.*

*Hoe voel jy teenoor jou man as dit gebeur?*

*Jy voel kwaad, jy voel kwaad, maar jy weet mos waar gaan jy baklei. Jy gaan mos daar baklei as julle daar is [slaapkamer]. Jy sal jou sê gesê kry.” - Cornelia*

[Yes, they take his side, even when he is wrong. You as the makhoti ....what can you do? If you go and fetch water or go to the toilet, you have to cry there, wipe you tears and your heart is sore because your husband is not on your side and the people [family-in-law] ..... then you cry and cry. Then you wipe your tears and come out.

How do you feel towards your husband when this happens?

You are angry, but you know where you will get your chance to fight. You are going to fight when you are there [bedroom] with him. You will get a chance to speak your mind.]

#### **6.1.4. Other types of abuse**

##### **6.1.4.1. Witchcraft and accusations of witchcraft**

The *Umthakhati* is a witch doctor who can be approached by people to manipulate their own or other people’s lives. His doings are seen as evil. A *sangoma* is a traditional healer

who is sometimes consulted to undo the evil work of the Umthakhati. He may also be consulted to cast evil spells and is thus not always seen to be a healer. *Corrabella* is a surreptitious method which could be employed to influence someone else, but not necessarily with the help of a witch doctor.

Witchcraft is a problem not only experienced by the amakhoti or even the female gender at large. Only four participants indicated that they believe in the power of the sangoma when questioned in this regard.

A strong theme emerged regarding accusations made by the family-in-law that the amakhoti used corrabella to manipulate their husbands' actions (n = 11). These accusations were made specifically when a good relationship existed between husband and wife and seemed to be intended to disrupt the relationship between the couple. Although the husband is the target of the accusations in some cases, the woman is, without exception, the one to bare the brunt.

● *"..... when you and your husband ...they're so closely together and understand each other , they are going to tell you that you are a witch, you corrabella him. By just listening at you and everything, because he won't allow to them to do anything to you. Those are the vulgar language you are going to get from them "You are a witch, you corrabella my brother, you go to that witch doctor" and everything. They don't need you and your husband to be close. There must always be a gap between you two, they can even use him against you. Then it is very good for them."* - Josephine

In two cases the makhoti were accused of using witchcraft when no other logical reason for illness could be found.

- *“Umthakhathi... yes, I was accused of giving poison to the porridge in the morning because she was sick and couldn't understand why she was sick.” - Lungiswa*

In another three cases it was reported that the participants felt that they were the victims of witchcraft and in these cases the mother-in-law was suspected as the aggressor.

#### **6.1.4.2. Name giving**

When a woman becomes a makhoti, she usually gets a new name ( $n = 18$ ) which is used when the family-in-law and her husband address her. Participants reported mixed feelings about this practice. The majority of participants felt either positive ( $n = 8$ ) about their makhoti names or indifferent ( $n = 3$ ), while others disliked them ( $n = 2$ ) as they found their names insulting. Others are uncomfortable with the connotation that the name has ( $n = 5$ ). The selective use of the name by the husband (e.g. only when he is angry) seems to add to the resistance against this practice.

- *“ No, I don't feel all right, because the others they give that name... they want to use you for money and everything... clothes and food.” - Portia*

- *“With me it was a stigma, when I am just thinking now. It was a stigma, because it was a thing that they have a control on you... a burden. It's not a good name : try and build ...” - Josephine*

#### **6.1.4.3. Lobola**

Without going into great detail about the history of lobola and the changes that the custom has undergone with time, it can only be said that the custom is still upheld (Ramphele, 1996; Siqwana-Ndlulu, 1993). Of the twenty participants, only one has not been lobola'ed.



She expressed feelings of guilt towards her own family as a result and reported to feel undignified in their presence.

Junod (1913) provides a summary of the advantages as well as the negative consequences of the lobola system.

The advantages are that it strengthens the patriarchal family in the sense that it endorses the right of the head of the family. It also marks the difference between the legitimate and illegitimate marriages and puts hindrances in the way of breaking up the marriage as it obliges the family of the bride to pay back the lobola should she leave.

Junod does, however, challenge the idea that lobola is a contract between the families to guarantee the good treatment of the wife by her husband and vice versa. It seems to be overruled by the notion that the wife is owned by the husband and his family.

The negative consequences mentioned by Junod (1913) are that it reduces the woman to an inferior position in the relationship with her husband and family-in-law and puts the bride entirely at the mercy of her family regarding the choice of a husband. She also has to work for her husband who gives her little in return. She is literally owned by him. Junod was of the opinion that the lobola system further endorses the double standards with regard to extra-marital sexual affairs and the paternal right to the children borne from the marriage. In the event of a divorce, the mother is separated from her children forever. In general, the lobola system causes strained relations between the two contracting families.

There was clearly still ambiguity in the minds of the participants about the desirability of the practice.

● *"To me I can say we are being sold. Because sometimes even your father or your mother he can't care with you because he get something. But at the same side... .. on that side, if you are not lobola'ed, you've got no value. Because that husband... .. if you*

*are just going, he will say "You must go, because I didn't pay anything". So maybe you'll say I got a chance to be another ... I can say that. I can't say if it is good or not good because maybe if you are doing something... we are doing a Xhosa beer and call another families... if you are not being lobola'ed, then the others ... other makhoti's... will say "You see, that is why you are so cheap with your husband: because he didn't lobola you." Then you don't feel comfortable in that group of makhoti's if you are not lobola'ed." - Nomvuso*

The women find themselves in a position where they have insight in the negative consequences of lobola, but they also desire the social rewards of being lobola'ed.

● *"No, it [amount of lobola] is a secret. Maybe I will increase because I ... maybe my husband paid five cows, I will say "My husband pay me seven cows" although I know that he maybe ... because you want that they think better." - Nomvuso*

● *"So if your husband didn't lobola you, your parents also didn't take a notice of you, but if you have been lobola'ed, you are a good child." - Zoleka*

#### **6.1.4.4. Interference with education and work**

A pattern of interruption of school education or work is found once the women became amakhoti. For thirteen of the participants, becoming a makhoti meant either leaving school or stopping work. Two of the school leavers have returned to school after many years but find it difficult to cope with both school (night classes) and their household chores.

● *“He said ..... promise me: “Okay Lungiswa, there is a finishing school here. You can go back to school and finish up” .... because I was doing Std 9. You know that time I only passed Std 9 half semester. But really, after we married, he said “No, I can’t have a wife going back to school. How is my family going to tell me? What is the family going to say?” So I have to go down and just give up. I stay in and become makhoti.” - Lungiswa*

The other participants were either not working or attending school ( $n = 3$ ) or were allowed to continue working ( $n = 4$ ). Those who were allowed to continue working, wore their traditional makhoti clothes to work, doing their house duties after work while others used their holiday leave to visit their family-in-law and fulfil their makhoti duties.

It must not be assumed that the interruption of school or work was necessarily involuntary, but the fact remains that the women did not have a free choice in this regard.

## **6.2. EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF ABUSE**

The reader is reminded that the results of this study are limited to the description of data with the purpose of establishing whether the treatment that the amakhoti receive is abusive or not. Such a small sample limits the inferences that can be made. For this reason, the description of the psychological context of abuse is confined to the participants’ verbalised expectations of marital life, their emotions and their coping skills which were related during the interviews.

### **6.2.1. Expectations of marital life**

The importance of marriage, despite of what it might entail for the makhoti, was evident in the interviews with the women. They grow up seeing what marriage holds for a woman and yet it is an inescapable part of their destiny. On the day that the wedding process of



the Xhosa woman is initiated, her identity changes: she receives a new name, she takes on a new role in the household and she is alienated from her friends, family and husband (whom she may never call by his first name again). She is even stripped of her own taste in clothes in that she wears compulsory clothing after her wedding (see section 3.4.2.).

● *“Yes, the first day my mom phoned me when I was going there to be umakhoti. Then she phoned me and told me that “You must behave like an old woman now. You wanted to get married, now you must face the consequences of that. You must wake up early in the morning. 5 o’clock you must get up and prepare tea for everyone and make breakfast then you clean the house before .....” I was also working that time...before I go to work. Before I go, the house must be spick-and-span.... That is what my mother told me.”*

- Monica

● *“I don't care for that... I don't mind because I know the treatment of makhoti . I know how to treat makhoti and I was thinking of ..... “Ooh, how is people going to treat me because I know nothing” ” - Mary*

● *“To me it was very sad, because when I just told my mother that in this family there is no-one that care about me. And also I have to run to my parents and also they told me: “You have to go there”. There is no-one who care about me. What I can do? Because I feel the pain alone. He can go outside he can bring the girlfriends in, don’t talk . And he can accuse you: “You have the boyfriends” Don’t talk; that is the marriage.” - Josephine*

The following quotation from Junod (1913) summarises the expectations of marital life for the makhoti:

Let me say that, though a woman cannot imagine life without marriage, she does not enter the new state with any enthusiasm. Her parents have warned her that she will be ill-treated, accused of witchcraft and of adultery, etc. Her sisters bewail her fate on her wedding day in song (p.186).



### 6.2.2. Emotions experienced by participants

It was obvious that relatively little emotion was expressed by participants in this study, despite the horror of their experiences. Often the women told their stories as if they were outsiders relating the facts. Hardly any *positive* emotion was displayed by the participants while relating their experiences. An explanation for the lack of positive emotion could possibly relate to the fact that the research project focused on abuse. The fact that other explanations may exist, is recognised but that would fall beyond the scope of this study.

Thomas' (1993) comment on the value of critical ethnography, applies to the emotions experienced by the participants: "The gap between onstage rhetoric and backstage action, becomes a way of teasing out the contradictions that subjects must resolve when faced with competing demands of their daily existence" (p. 38).

As much as the women wanted to believe; "That is our culture, we must just accept that", their emotional reaction to the treatment they received as amakhoti, told another story. The emotions which were related by participants, are discussed below.

#### 6.2.2.1. Anger

The participants expressed feelings of anger related to abusive work practices (n = 12), direct physical violence (n = 4), and both types of sexual abuse (n = 8). Types of psychological abuse which evoked anger were, infidelity (n = 5), breach of privacy (n = 4), verbal abuse and circulating slander (n = 10), and unfair taking of sides (n = 6). Emotions related to economic manipulation included anger (n = 7) and sadness or both. Feelings of disgust were reported in relation to having intercourse with a man they hardly knew (in cases where marriages were arranged) (n = 8) but also in this instance, the emotion of sadness featured. The participants expressed feelings of resentment and resistance towards their husbands, family-in-law (n = 8) and own family (n = 5).

#### **6.2.2.2. Anxiety**

Anxiety was experienced by participants in anticipation of the marriage (e.g. in arranged marriages) and makhoti-status ( $n = 5$ ) and, ironically, in considering public opinion about leaving the abusive situation ( $n = 8$ ).

The observation of the hlonipa rules, taboos and work practices were a source of anxiety for the majority of the participants ( $n = 16$ ). They reported feeling uncomfortable in the presence of the mother-in-law and father-in-law ( $n = 14$ ). The threat of direct physical violence was a further source of anxiety ( $n = 6$ ) and so was apparent barrenness ( $n = 4$ ).

#### **6.2.2.3. Fright**

The emotion of fright, as reported by participants, was related to the anticipation of physical violence in instances where the husband, own brother or brother-in-law became aggressive ( $n = 4$ ).

#### **6.2.2.4. Sadness**

Lazarus (1991) calls anger, anxiety, guilt, shame, envy, and hope, “emotions of adaptational struggle” in the context of the threat of, or actual loss. By implication, these emotions are characterised by the potential for active coping to the extent that one is not helpless to change things. When the efforts to restore the loss fail, and the person must come to terms with it. Depending on the stage and the dynamics of the struggle, a complexity of these aforementioned emotions, including sadness, begin to play a significant role and are referred to as “depression” (with the pathological implications) or “grief” (with its active and prolonged coping struggle) (Lazarus, 1991; p. 247).



Sadness has an element of resignation rather than struggle, at which time the person is moving towards acceptance and disengagement of the commitment (Power & Dalglish, 1997).

After anger, sadness was the emotion which was experienced most often by participants. Participants expressed feelings of hurt, loneliness, abandonment, rejection and desperation. They also reported feeling incompetent and unappreciated. Sadness was expressed in relation to isolation ( $n = 7$ ), forced intercourse or the loss of virginity ( $n = 5$ ), situations where children had to be abandoned ( $n = 4$ ), and instances where education was interrupted ( $n = 4$ ). The lack of freedom of choice also evoked feelings of sadness in some instances ( $n = 5$ ).

#### **6.2.2.5. Jealousy**

Feelings of jealousy were experienced by participants whose husbands were unfaithful ( $n = 7$ ).

#### **6.2.2.6. Love**

Love for the husband was only expressed in cases where the husband was the choice of the wife ( $n = 10$ ). Two participants reported to have feelings for their in-laws.

### **6.2.3. Coping with the situation**

Coping with a situation implies adaptive behaviour on two distinct levels which may take place separately or simultaneously. The coping skills which are applied in a situation are

either problem-focused or emotion-focused and the choice of application of specific skills are mainly influenced by two factors - personality and social support (Papalia & Olds, 1988).

Problem-focused coping skills, according to the Cognitive Appraisal Theory (see section 5.2), are skills which are applied in an attempt to solve the problem. These coping skills are more likely to be used when the situation is perceived to be changeable. In this situation the individual attempts to alter the problem rather than coping with the stress which it arouses. With emotion-focused coping, the application of skills focuses on managing the emotional response to the problem. Defence mechanisms are used for the purpose of coping emotionally (Power & Dalgleish, 1997).

Participants' portrayal of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping skills are discussed in the following two subsections.

#### **6.2.3.1. Defence mechanisms (Emotion-focused coping skills)**

It became clear from the interviews that the women perceived changing their makhoti position as an impossible task and therefore mostly attempted to cope with the situation by applying emotion-focused coping skills. Coping skills displayed during the interviews are listed below:

Sublimation, which is defined as the rechanneling of uncomfortable feelings into acceptable activities. Three of the participants resorted to writing letters when they found a situation unbearable. This is not seen as a problem-focused coping skill since they were all conscious of the culturally prescribed way in which problems had to be dealt with. They also wrote letters to various individuals, not only to their parents.

- *“No, if I feel a pain about something wrong that I didn’t like, I have to write a letter and give to the children that they are going to school. They are going to my home.” - Nomvuso*

Repression, is seen as the subconscious blocking of anxiety-producing urges or experiences. There are many examples of repressed feelings and urges in the data (n = 14). They range from, repressing an urge to leave the relationship, to repressing feelings of distress in the sexual relationship with the husband. Cultural taboos may have encouraged repression and it seems as if repressed feelings are often the price that is paid in order to be accepted in the new family.

- *“....if you want to express your own feelings to them, you are not makhoti because you want to tell them what to do if they’ve got the right to tell you what to do . Those things you have to swallow it, kill us emotionally ..... ” - Josephine*
- *“..... Now, to tell the truth, the sex life..... it is not good, you know. I wasn’t..... I didn’t really care about it. The only thing I cared about is to have a place of my own for my child, you know. So I didn’t really..... of course when you are a woman there are times that you need it, I mean like..... or it doesn’t fulfil you, you know. And then I just ignore that feeling.” - Hilda*

Rationalisation, defined as justifying one’s behaviour in a difficult situation by pretending that the difficulty does not exist, was commonly cited with regard to identifying with the cultural group rather than justifying behaviour on a personal level. This defence mechanism was the one most often displayed by the participants (n = 16). The quotation below represents the broad rationalisation for behaviour ranging from staying in a physically abusive relationship to accepting loss of custody over children.



- *“But I couldn’t do otherwise, because that was the way our culture ... .. we must be like that.”* - Nonzima

When a person gratifies an urge indirectly, by substituting it with a safer or more available object, person or activity, the defence mechanism is referred to as displacement. This defence mechanism is used by the mothers-in-law rather than the amakhoti. The makhoti becomes the safer, more available person on whom feelings of frustration are taken out. When the hierarchical frame of reference of the Xhosa community is considered, it could explain why this defence mechanism is used by mothers-in-law and other women such as the sister-in-law and own mothers. The following quotation was related by one of the subjects as a typical reaction of women to the makhoti-status:

*“If my own in-laws treat me the same , I am going to treat you [daughter-in-law; new makhoti] the same”* - Josephine

From the quotation it becomes apparent that the mother-in-law directs her repressed anger, sadness and other emotions which she experienced as a makhoti, towards her daughter-in-law and not towards the individuals responsible for her emotions.

#### **6.2.3.2. Problem-focused coping skills**

Gelles and Straus (1988) group the coping skills which are used to end violence into three categories. The first category refers to personal strategies which include: talking, promising, threatening, hiding, avoidance, active and passive defence. The second category has to do with the use of informal help resources such as own family, in-laws, friends, neighbours and shelters. The third category refers to the use of formal help resources including lawyers, police, and social services. According to Lazarus’ definition

(see section 6.2.3.), these skills can all be seen as problem-focused coping skills and they provide more detailed insight into problem-focused coping.

The problem-focused skills displayed by the participants of this study are discussed briefly according to the Gelles and Straus (1988) categories.

Personal strategies that were used by the participants included:

- assertiveness (e.g. leaving (n = 8), removing the black doekie themselves (n = 5), discussing the problem with the perpetrator (n = 7) and taking a stand publicly (n = 6))
- observing rules and taboos (n = 20) (e.g. avoidance of certain persons and places; wearing prescribed dress)
- retaliation (e.g. being unfaithful to husband (n = 2); stalking of husband and his girlfriend (n = 2))
- active verbal and physical defence (n = 3)
- passive defence (e.g. silent treatment (n = 3); throwing away food (n = 4))

Informal help resources that were approached (n = 10), were typically consulted in ways in which cultural practices allowed. It appears that the only culturally endorsed manner in which the amakhoti can improve living conditions and sort out differences with their husbands is through the family-in-law. Culture prescribes that the makhoti and the accused be called in, together with the father-in-law or mother-in-law as arbitrator, and the problem discussed openly. Due to her minor position as compared to that of her husband, she is not allowed to attend any inquiry without being accompanied by her husband and then she is not even allowed to speak in his presence. She may not even challenge her husband if he accuses her of anything (Mkhize, 1990).

During the interviews it became clear that women who approached their family-in-law for support, faced even further victimisation and humiliation.



● *“They say it is culture .....if you have got a problem..... because you are no longer belonging to that family ..... you don’t belong to that family anymore, you belong here. So your problems must be solved here.” - Judy*

Artz’s (1998) conclusion confirms the findings of this study:

“Somehow, tradition seems to exclude women from certain sites of support and control. African women in particular seem to be particularly vulnerable to abuse in relation to rights concerning their safety, their children, property and integrity of person.” (p. 26)

Without exception, in cases where participants reported to having approached their family-in-law with marital problems, the in-laws took sides against the makhoti or excluded her from the ‘hearing’ and gave insufficient feedback on what had been discussed.

● *“And when I went there to this uncle to report what happened, he would say: “Okay, my child I will come and talk to your husband” And when he comes he will just call him and get in the bedroom.....not calling me .....and they would talk. I don’t know what they were talking because I was the one that go and report him. So when he comes out, he will say “I’ve talked to your husband. There mustn’t be no nonsense anymore.” So it will end up like that and I will be very much hurt because I was the one that went to his place and report what was happening. And that time my face was swollen because he clapped me. And what I was thinking was that he was supposed to call me and he’d ask me to say all the things I said to in front of him. But he wouldn’t do so. And at the end I wouldn’t do that I wouldn’t go to his place. I would just talk to my husband.” - Nonzima*

Returning to the own family for help was an option exercised by eight participants. The option to return is related to the lobola custom (see section 6.1.4.3).

Formal help resources were not used by any of the participants.



### 6.3. SOCIAL CONTEXT OF ABUSE

#### 6.3.1. Choice of a partner

Historically, the extended family has always played an extremely important part in all decisions made by the individual. This includes decisions on the choice of a marital partner (Junod, 1913). Although the practice of arranging marriages has largely discontinued (see section 3.4.3.) the family contributes to the payment of lobola. Since the extended family contributes to the lobola payment, it is assumed that they have a say in the choice of a partner and that they benefit from her service to the family-in-law.

● *“He went to some of his relatives so that they can go to my home [to initiate lobola negotiations]. So they went there. So they come and they see me and they loved me. So they wanted me to be their wife” - Hilda*

● *“..... so I must know that I am not just makhoti for my husband and my mother-in-law ..... for the whole family; the relatives and everything. I must look after them. If they come to that house, I must know that I should be there.” - Zoleka*

A summary with regard to the choice (or lack thereof) of a marital partner is found in Table 5. The four traditional ways in which a man can obtain a bride (see section 3.4.3) have been used as a basis for categorising data. However, not each participant's story fitted these categories precisely and is reflected as such in the table.

Table 5

Summary of Participants' Choice of Partners

<b>Name</b>	<b>Choice of marital partner</b>
Cornelia	Arranged by families
Eugenia	Own choice
Hilda	Own choice
Jean	Own choice
Josephine	Own choice
Judy	Own choice
Lillian	Own choice
Lungiswa	Own choice, eloped with boyfriend
Maria	Arranged by families
Mary	Matchmaking by church members
Mavis	Own choice
Monica	Own choice
Nombulelo	Abducted, arranged by families
Nomvuso	Abducted, arranged by families
Nonzima	Arranged by families
Portia	Own choice
Phumza	Own choice
Rosa	Arranged by families
Violet	Agreed without ever having met the husband personally
Zoleka	Own choice

To summarise, Table 5 indicates that twelve participants married the partner of their choice and of the remaining eight who did not marry the partner of their choice, two were subjected to the custom of abduction (see section 3.4.3).

Marriage is seen as the joining of two families and clans (hence the strong taboos regulating the marriage between members of the same clan)( Jonas, 1972). The hlonipa rules therefore also apply to any person belonging to the husband's clan.

● *"You have to respect anyone .....if you've got a clan names. My husband is a "Madiba". Any Madiba in that location I have to respect him. Any Madiba in that location..... it is not the same family of Greyville, I have to respect him because only of Madiba, the clan name is the same clan name. That is the only things that make us suffer."* - Josephine

### **6.3.2. Residential pattern**

The makhoti is still expected to reside in the home of her family-in-law for at least part of the time that she is a makhoti (preferably in the home of the parents-in-law). As was mentioned in section 3.4.5., moving out of the paternal home often (partly) marks the end of the makhoti-status.

Nineteen of the participants, have resided with their parents-in-law or other people designated by the family-in-law to fulfil the role of parents-in-law. In the other case, church members fulfilled this role, but without the consent of the parents. The period spent in the paternal home varied from a couple of weeks to several years (see Table 4, p.35). Nineteen of the participants still have strong links with the rural Transkeian and Ciskeian areas (also called "the land") which seem to symbolise the cultural 'roots' or heritage of the Xhosa community. When the women (some who have stopped being a makhoti for some time) return there to partake in cultural festivities and family gatherings, they adopt the role of makhoti once again.



● “..... even if you move far away, you can go during the weekends just to work for her [mother-in-law]..... washing and cleaning. Just like me during December, I was there. I have got my own home now, my own place but December I took one week away for my mother-in-law and I have to do everything for her..... plough the field, clean the houses, everything, remove weeds.....” - Zoleka

### 6.3.3. Reasons for staying in the marital relationship

Reasons offered by the participants for remaining in the marital relationship, were:

- Value as a bride has decreased due to the fact that she was no longer a virgin
- Financial constraints related to isolation by both her own family and family-in-law
- Social pressure from the family-in-law, wanted to be “a good wife”
- Physically constrained, had bodyguards following her
- Isolation from resources such as transport
- Isolation by own family related to lobola
- Community sanctions

● “..... before, my problem was this: I have been lobola’ed. So if I went to my home, my parents must bring that lobola back. And secondly I am afraid to go to be a girl again because people will gossip with me and they will call me with names. There are names we call people who..... [get divorced]” - Zoleka

### 6.3.4. Patterns of perpetration

During the analysis of data, it became apparent that certain people in the extended family indulged in particular types of abuse. Their behaviour cannot be seen in isolation and

certain types of abuse cannot be linked to specific persons. The behaviour of these people is referred to briefly in the following sections.

#### **6.3.4.1. Mother-in-law**

The mothers-in-law typically, were the ones supervising the work of the amakhoti and monitoring their observation of the hlonipa rules ( $n = 16$ ). Mothers-in-law also play the leading role in economic manipulation ( $n = 14$ ). Not only do they regulate the money sent to the amakhoti by their husbands, but they are the ones who demand that the makhoti buy groceries for the house from her own pocket.

Together with the sisters-in-law, the mothers-in-law were also guilty of verbal abuse ( $n = 14$ ), circulating slander ( $n = 12$ ) and siding with their sons ( $n = 14$ ), even if it defied all reason.

#### **6.3.4.2. Father-in-law**

The father-in-law is the main figure responsible for the infliction of taboos and rituals, although mostly passively ( $n = 11$ ). Many of the participants reported to have either feared or “respected him very much” ( $n = 11$ ), but it was never reported that the father-in-law ever threatened to harm the makhoti. The fathers-in-law are, however, actively involved in the choice of marital partners in the case of arranged weddings and they are the key players in the lobola custom ( $n = 14$ ). They also typically, failed dismally in solving marital problems and mostly sided with the husband ( $n = 11$ ).

#### **6.3.4.3. Sister-in-law**

The sisters-in-law played the role of the understudy of the mothers-in-law. They often indulged in verbal abuse ( $n = 13$ ), slandering the makhoti ( $n = 8$ ) and inflicting harsh work practices ( $n = 6$ ). The sisters-in-law, in particular, often accused the makhoti of witchcraft ( $n = 10$ ). It is the duty of the sister-in-law to present the symbolic makhoti outfit to the new bride and to give the makhoti her new name ( $n = 16$ ). She also watches the makhoti's every move regarding the hlonipa rules ( $n = 7$ ).

The sisters-in-law ( $n = 8$ ) were also found to be very outspoken about matters concerning the sexuality of the makhoti (e.g. commenting on apparent barrenness).

#### **6.3.4.4. Brother-in-law**

As in the case of the sister-in-law, the brother is the understudy of the father-in-law. The brother-in-law, in fact, often literally took the role of the father-in-law in the lobola negotiations and in the hlonipa rules in the father-in-law's absence ( $n = 8$ ).

Three participants reported that the brother-in-law indulged in physical violence towards them.

#### **6.3.4.5. Husband**

The husbands, in the first place, enjoyed the benefit of all the types of abuse. They indulged in direct physical violence ( $n = 7$ ), all forms of sexual abuse ( $n = 7$ ), and were often unfaithful ( $n = 8$ ). It was mainly the husbands who demanded that their wives stop working or interrupt their education ( $n = 11$ ).



#### **6.3.4.6. Own family**

The greatest perpetration by the makhoti's own family was that they isolated her - financially and socially (n = 14). They often sent the makhoti back to an abusive environment when she appealed to them for assistance.

### **6.4. SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

The results of this study reflect a three part analysis of the makhoti-status. Firstly, the various ways in which the treatment of the amakhoti was found to be abusive were discussed. These included physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse and other types of abuse, specifically relevant to the makhoti-status. Secondly, emerging themes relevant to the social context and thirdly, the results of the analysis of psychological aspects of the treatment were discussed. This included emotions as well as coping behaviour related by the participants.

Siqwana-Ndlulo (1993) quotes Soga saying that the "ill-treatment of wives and slavery was non-existent among the Xhosa and the Africans" (p.100). The results of this study stand in sharp contrast with a statement such as the above and indicate that there is little romance in being a makhoti in the Xhosa culture.

To conclude, Ramphele (1996) is quoted as implying that adherence to culture involves both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping skills and should be taken into account when dealing with abuse in the Xhosa community.

"The adherence to tradition and its use as a shield from the pain and humiliation of conquest and domination by foreign cultures, is a common defence mechanism. It is also a form of adaptive behaviour which serves survival purposes." (p.53)

## CHAPTER 7

### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the results of this study are brought in line with the literature review on both the socio-cultural perspective on family violence and with what is known about the makhoti-status in the Xhosa culture. Major findings in this regard are highlighted.

#### 7.1. DISCUSSION

The treatment a makhoti receives at the hands of her own family, her husband and family-in-law has been studied in order to determine whether this treatment could be labelled abusive or not. The results of this study leave little doubt that the amakhoti are subjected to abusive treatment in a variety of ways. Indications are that the practice of serving as a makhoti for a period has prevailed, and that women have little or no choice in becoming a makhoti. Results of the study also indicate that patrilocal residence for a makhoti in the Xhosa community, is still customary. The period spent in the home of the family-in-law varies greatly; while some spend years with their family-in-law, others move into their own home within a couple of months, only returning to the paternal home over weekends or during the December holidays. In the interviews with the participants of this study, harsh work practices was the one aspect of the makhoti-status to which all protested. This may be attributed to the fact that this is the obvious way in which the women are exploited. Even those participants who were not as much aware of what could be regarded as abusive treatment as the Mosaic community workers, felt that they were being abused in this regard. Cheal (1991) found that social isolation of women through familial commitments (such as an excessive work load) is one way in which male domination in the home is sustained.

In every type of abuse discussed in chapter 6, the feelings and opinions of the women were disregarded. The notions of male superiority and women as the property of men featured strongly as well. The results of this study indicate that the assumed superiority of men in the Xhosa culture is still adhered to and continues to influence the lives of women living with them. Schneider (1994) found this to be a universal trend. He states: “ There has been little change in the culture of female subordination that supports and maintains abuse” (p122).

Participants in this study have shown insight into the fact that some culturally endorsed practices may sustain their inferior position and that it may contribute to perpetuation of violence (e.g. lobola and culturally endorsed infidelity of husbands). This concurs with findings such as Artz’s (1998) study of access to justice for rural women in South Africa. Participants in her study listed the following as the perceived causes of violence against women: lack of respect for women, problems with children, alcohol abuse, unemployment, suspicion or jealousy, accusations of infidelity or conspiracy, and culture (referring specifically to the lobola marriage). Despite this insight, it was observed that the participants who have married daughters themselves, have without exception, also accepted lobola. The researcher makes this observation without any judgement or consideration of other circumstances such as the wishes of their husbands which may have influenced their decision in this regard.

Regarding the choice of a marital partner, seven of the participants did not marry their their partners willingly and one agreed to marry a man whom she only met on her wedding day. The youngest woman in the group who was forced into a marriage, is currently thirty two years old. This may suggest that arranged marriages is not something from the distant past. It became apparent in this study that even if the consent of both parties in the modern Xhosa marriage is sought, the decision is still influenced by the extended family (see section 6.3.1). The fact that all participants married according to customary law, in addition to marriage under civil law, also indicates that traditional and modern marriages continue to coexist.



Taking into consideration the limitations of drawing inferences from a sample of twenty participants, the emotional reaction of the amakhoti to the treatment they receive, nevertheless strongly resembles the typical reaction of abused women described in literature (e.g. Marcus, 1994; Walker, 1984). During the makhoti-stage, the woman is alienated from both her own family and family-in-law through what is supposedly culturally endorsed behaviour. She is, in fact, isolated from all sources of social support and this plays a major part in her appraisal of situations and her subsequent coping behaviour.

Another facet, prevalent throughout the study, was the personal identity of the makhoti which was constantly compromised in favour of the group identity. It starts with the changing of the name, to wearing uniform clothing and continues until she is effectively cut off from all support systems (family, friends and even her husband). In fact, the makhoti is stripped of everything which confirmed her personal identity before the marriage (make-up, clothing, work/education etc.). The matter is complicated by the fact that group pressure in the African culture is so strong and that the individual's identity is established through the group that she belongs to (see section 1.5).

It becomes clear from the discussion of the African world view (section 1.5) that abuse in the African culture takes on a whole new dimension in that the extended family is involved and that group cohesion is greater than in the Western culture. This, inevitably, has an influence on the motivation and ability of the woman to leave an abusive relationship. The reasons for staying (see section 6.3.3.) indicate the extent to which women are not free to make their own choices and the extent of intimidation when they do. Other factors that may play a role in perpetuating the abuse are the cultural regulations regarding children. Maithufi (1993) found that the potential loss of custody over children is a major consideration for a woman should she contemplate divorce. The women in this study voiced their resentment of these regulations.



The sociological paradigm assumes that the source of violence is found in the relationship between the individual and his/her social environment (see section 3.1.). This study describes cultural practices and regulations which create an environment conducive to abuse during a certain phase in a Xhosa woman's married life. These practices are still very much a part of modern Xhosa society. In fact, the following conclusion by Ramphela (1996) has been echoed throughout this investigation: "Xhosa traditional customs and practices remain the cornerstone of the New Crossroads community. The adherence to tradition is regarded as non-negotiable. It gives them a sense of belonging and rootedness in a complex and changing environment." (p. 53). In the opinion of the researcher, the results of this and other recent studies (e.g. Artz, 1999 and Glanz and Spiegel, 1996) indicate that all of the factors listed in Table 3 (p. 17) are prevalent in the South African society and bear specific relevance to the makhoti-status in the Xhosa community. When the treatment which the amakhoti endure is compared to the ideal treatment represented by the human rights charters, this cultural practice is undoubtedly highly abusive towards women. Indications are that this treatment may also set the trend for future power relations between the extended patrilineal household (including the husband) and the Xhosa woman. The researcher views the manifestation of the abusive nature of the makhoti-status (which affects many Nguni women in South Africa) as the most significant finding of this study. The fact that the entire extended family is involved in the abuse of the makhoti and the fact that this behaviour follows certain patterns are also seen as significant findings.

The researcher finds it ironic that the Human Rights Commission has "sent out a clear signal that humiliating initiation rituals at schools and colleges will be outlawed as unconstitutional" (Hadland, 1999, p.1), but that the treatment which the amakhoti have to endure seems to pass unnoticed.

The description of various types of abuse provided insight into the extent of the problem. The message was clear that, even if some practices are culturally endorsed, they remain a

burden to the women. Both physical and emotional discomfort were experienced, but the women were apparently socialised to accept the treatment. Regarding the Xhosa community, Ramphele (1996) states: "Children are thus driven to the conclusion that personal relationships are shaped by the ability of the powerful to enforce their will on the powerless whose fate is to submit." (p. 56). In this regard it is also significant that none of the participants have, at any stage, made use of formal help resources which include the police service, lawyers and the court.

Although it cannot be confirmed without further research, it seems likely that the cultural practices associated with the makhoti-status are applied in a more traditional way in the rural areas than in urban areas, in which case they are more likely to persist. The strong links with the Transkei and Ciskei homelands may play a role in the preservation of the tradition in urban areas. Definite changes to customary practices are already evident, for example the freedom of choice of a partner. It can, however, not be accepted that the recognition of women's rights (in practice) in the African context will follow the same route as that in the Western culture or progress at the same pace. The notion that duty or loyalty towards the community should be given higher priority than the rights of the individual is evident from behaviour such as the verbal abuse which a couple may endure when they move away from traditional division of labour roles in the household (see section 6.1.1.1) or when it comes to family planning (section 6.1.2.2). This needs to be taken into consideration when empowerment programmes for black women are planned or therapeutic intervention contemplated.

## **7.2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Walker (1979) has identified nine common characteristics displayed by women who have been battered (including emotional and sexual battering) as well as nine common characteristics displayed by batterers. One of the characteristics common in most battered women is that they often suffer from guilt, but tend to deny the terror and anger they feel.



Only one of the participants of this study displayed feelings of guilt, but anger was reported by most of the participants (see section 6.2.2.1). Similarly, one of the characteristics commonly displayed by batterers is that they frequently use sex as an act of aggression to enhance self-esteem. The results of this study indicate that sex is seen as a male privilege in the Xhosa tradition which may be exercised at any time. These notions underwrite the basic premises of the social-cultural theories. The implications for treatment and prevention initiatives are that cultural norms and values in the Xhosa tradition affect the concept of abuse qualitatively and should thus be treated as such.

The fact that women may endorse the tradition of being a makhoti themselves (see sections 6.1.4.3, 6.3.4.1 and 6.3.4.3), complicates the design of prevention and support programmes. There is little doubt, however, that the treatment which a makhoti receives does not cease when she is no longer a makhoti, but becomes a form of systematic discrimination in which women are kept in a subordinate and disempowered position (also economically disempowered) in the familial relations. They also face both structural and functional obstacles if they do not submit.

“... the combined effects of poverty and violence ... create formidable barriers to women’s equality, mental and physical health, and their full participation in civil society” (Artz, 1999, p.154).

The limited access that single women have to state subsidised housing schemes and social support from friends and family (Artz, 1999, also see section 6.3.3) are just two examples of such barriers. Intervention at both political and community level is needed in order to address the issue. At community level, women need to know what their rights are and what should be regarded as abusive treatment (and this includes cultural rites and practices such as the makhoti-stage of a marriage). They need to be empowered to challenge inappropriate behaviour, particularly in the context of cultural practices. Communities must also understand that domestic violence is a public matter and that the shame of abuse and rape should fall on the perpetrator and not on the victim. On a political level, the human rights watchdogs should address the issue of abusive cultural initiation ceremonies



just as it is addressing initiation ceremonies at tertiary institutions. The present government has already shown their commitment to reducing violence against women, but fails to speak out against cultural practices such as the makhoti-stage. Artz (1999) states: “ Within the current political climate, however, rural women are met with other, more subtle forms of political, institutional, economic and social exclusion, namely ‘tradition’ and patriarchy” (p. 154). The message should be sent out loud and clear to communities that abuse remains abuse, even if it is masked as a cultural practice.

The investigation into the makhoti-stage of the Xhosa marriage was, to a great extent, exploratory, and some aspects of the issue warrant further research. The researcher recommends that the following aspects related to the abuse of the amakhoti as well as the African marriage need to be explored in greater depth in order to make valid inferences:

- The connection between the abuse of the amakhoti, women’s abuse and other forms of violence in the black South African community should be explored from a culture of violence theory perspective.
- Differences in the socialisation of a girl child and a boy child may cast light on the dynamics of abuse in the context of the extended family.
- Development of an intervention programme aimed at the Xhosa man, could prove to be invaluable in combatting abuse against women in the Xhosa community.
- The aspect of coping with the abusive situation warrants more research. When it is considered that social support plays an important role in coping behaviour and the fact that the makhoti is effectively isolated from her social support systems, the results of this investigation barely scratched the surface.
- The applicability of the battered woman syndrome for the black South African community has potential value for therapeutic intervention.
- Identity development of the Xhosa woman has potential implications for empowerment and needs to be explored in greater depth.

- Victimization of women by women in the makhoti phase and beyond may also have value for empowerment programmes. Of specific relevance to the amakhoti may be the victimization by the mother-in-law.
- The apparent emotional dissociation from traumatic personal experiences (see section 6.2.2) leaves some unanswered questions. The influence of socialisation, for instance, could possibly be investigated.

Finally, the researcher proposes that in order to provide a substantive contribution to issues of violence against women in South Africa, narrative accounts of the silenced and invisible women should increasingly be included in research. It is through these “real life” stories that the extent and consequences of abuse is fully understood and only then can legislation and empowerment initiatives be transformed to be sensitive towards and to protect these women.



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## **APPENDIX: Abstracts from human rights charters**

### **African (Banjul) Charter on Human and People's Rights**

(Adopted June 1981, entered into force October 1986. Signed by South Africa in 1995 and ratified in June 1996)

#### **Article 5**

Every individual shall have the right to the respect of the dignity inherent in a human being and to the recognition of his legal status. All forms of exploitation and degradation of man particularly slavery, slavery trade, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment, shall be prohibited (p. 142)

#### **Article 9**

2. Every individual shall have the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the law (p. 143)

#### **Article 10**

1. Every individual shall have the right to free association provided that he abides by the law (p. 143)

#### **Article 12**

1. Every individual shall have the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of the State provided he abides by the law (p. 143)

#### Article 17

1. Every individual shall have the right to education (p. 144)

#### Article 19

All people shall be equal; they shall enjoy the same respect and shall have the same rights. Nothing shall justify the domination of a people by another (p.145)

#### Article 28

Every individual shall have the duty to respect and consider his fellow beings without discrimination, and to maintain relations aimed at promoting, safeguarding and reinforcing mutual respect and tolerance (p. 147)

#### Article 29

Every individual shall also have the duty

1. To preserve the harmonious development of the family and to work for the cohesion and respect of the family; to respect his parents at all times, to maintain them in case of need (p.147)

### **Women's Charter for Effective Equality (1994)**

#### Article 8. Family Life and Partnerships

- The diversity of family types should be recognised and treated fairly
- Women shall have freedom of choice in establishing relationships



- Women and men shall have such rights in respect of, amongst other things, division of property; maintenance and arrangements in respect of minor and/or dependant children both during and at the dissolution of marriage; as are required to ensure fair and equitable treatment of both with regard to their respective means, earning capacity, needs and responsibilities
- Women shall also have the right to decide on the nature and frequency of sexual contact within the marriage and intimate relationship
- Women should have equitable access to the financial resources of the household, and access to information with regard to the economic management of the household
- The integrity of the partnership has to be maintained without external and familial interference except where there is reason to believe physical, sexual and psychological abuse is occurring
- Women, including women married under the customary law or by religious rites, shall also be entitled to guardianship over children (p. 179)

#### Article 9. Custom, Culture and Religion

- Custom, culture and religion, as far as these impact upon the status of the women in marriage, in law and in public life, shall be participant to the equality clause in the Bill of Rights
- All women shall have the freedom to practise their own religion, culture or beliefs without fear
- Women, including those under customary law, must have the right to inherit (p.180)

#### Article 10. Violence against Women

- Women shall be entitled to security and integrity of the person which shall include the right to be free from all forms of violence everywhere

- There shall be legal protection for all women against sexual and racial harassment, all types of abuse and assault. The family advocate should also be entitled to act on behalf of the abused women in the family (p.180)

#### Article 11. Health

- Women have the right to control over their bodies, which includes the right to make reproductive decisions
- Access to information should be provided to enable women to make informed choices about their bodies and about health care. This includes information pertaining to reproductive health services, sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS; contraception, cervical and breast cancer; infertility; ante-natal, labour and post-natal care (p. 181)

### **Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996)**

#### Clause 9. Equality

3. The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth
4. No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3). National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination

#### Clause 10. Human dignity

Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected

#### Clause 12. Freedom and security of the person

1. Everyone has the right to freedom and security of person, which includes the right-
  - a. not to be deprived of freedom arbitrarily or without just cause
  - c. to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private causes
  - d. not to be tortured in any way;
  - e. not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way.
2. Everybody has the right to bodily and psychological integrity, which includes the right-
  - a. to make decisions concerning reproduction
  - b. security in and control over their body;

#### Clause 13. Slavery, servitude and forced labour

No one may be participated to slavery, servitude or forced labour

#### Clause 14. Privacy

Everyone has the right to privacy, which includes the right not to have

- c. their possessions seized
- d. the privacy of their communications infringed



**Clause 18. Freedom of association**

**Everyone has the right to freedom of association**

**Clause 21. Freedom of movement and residence**

**1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement**